

# Walden University

## COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

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Walden University  
2010

# ABSTRACT

[When Husbands Remain at Home:  
A Qualitative Look at the Support Air Force Husbands  
Receive During a Deployment.

by

Jenny Pedersen

M.A., Walden University, 2007  
B.S., Troy University 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
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## ABSTRACT

The experiences of being a military spouse are unique and often quite stressful, particularly during times of deployment. Previous research on military spouses only addressed the experiences of wives of active duty service members and ignored husbands who remain at home while their wives deploy. A review of the literature indicated that support during deployments is vital to the mental and physical health of the spouses who remain at home and further enables the military to complete its mission. However, there remains an important gap in the current literature regarding military spouses who are male. Because this growing population of spouses is underrepresented in the literature, it is unclear if husbands experience the same need for support as their female counterparts. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to use phenomenological methodology to explore the experiences of a group of husbands who remain at home during a deployment with regard to their need for support. Participants were recruited using both purposive and snowball sampling. Data were explicated through the use of coding thematic units based on meaning of the deployment as well as how and what support was received. Data were verified through the use of member checking, bracketing, and memoing and ultimately produced a thick description of the phenomenon. This study revealed that men experience the same types of stressors that women do; however they do not feel welcome in established support programs. This is an important contribution to the existing literature and will enhance social change initiatives by enabling support programs to be reworked to reach both men and women who are married to those serving on active duty.

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## DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my fellow piece of chopped liver; you know who you are. Without your initial joking comments, this entire line of research would likely never have happened. I love you like a brother my dear friend and my life simply wouldn't be the same without you.

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## CHAPTER 1:

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### Introduction

Wars, in both literature and in life, carry with them strong traditions. Since the times of the Odyssey, when Odysseus went off to fight in epic battles and his dutiful wife, Penelope, stayed behind awaiting his return, many people automatically assume a military spouse is a wife. That has traditionally been the case in the United States, where a regular military was established over 150 years ago (Knox & Price, 1995). Active duty service members were largely drafted into service, resulting in a predominantly single, male fighting force prior to World War II. After the war, this began to change. However, families did not make a large appearance on the scene until the All-volunteer Forces Act was enacted in the 1970s (Wolfowitz, 2002). As conscription ended, military recruiters turned to advertising, monetary bonuses, and educational benefits to recruit members, causing many young people to view the military as a career option (Knox & Price). According to the most current numbers released by the Department of Defense (DoD; n.d), there are 1, 447, 350 active duty service members in the United States, and over half of them are married. This increase in married active duty members resulted in an increased number of military spouses and families whose lifestyles are frequently disruptive to normal family routines and unfamiliar to most civilian families. These disruptions include frequent relocations to include overseas areas, uncertain and varying work schedules, temporary separations, threats to safety, and demands that often take precedence over family time (Kelley, Hock, Jarvis, Smith, Gaffney, & Bonney, 2002).

Another disruption is now a relatively common household term, thanks in part to the current Global War on Terror (GWOT): deployment. Military spouses are exposed to a variety of difficulties during deployments, including accepting sole responsibility for running a household, assuming parenting duties alone, maintaining a sense of normalcy for one's family, and regulating increased emotions that accompany the knowledge that one's spouse is in harm's way and might not return home.

### Background of the Problem

The topic of military induced separations, most frequently deployments, is not new in the literature and has been the subject of research for years. Much of the existing research has centered around the stress brought on by deployments and the need for spouses to establish coping strategies to counteract the negative effects this stress places on their physical and mental well being (Rosen, 1995). However, literature involving support and military spouses has almost exclusively been focused on wives of active duty service men (Bowen & Orthner, 1986; McCubbin, 1995; McFadyen, Kerpelman, & Alder-Balder, 2005; Pittman, Kerpelman & McFayden, 2004; Wood & Scarville, 1995).

In 1993, Section 6015, Title 10, U.S. Code, which had excluded women from combat, was repealed (Burrelli, 1996). Since then, women are allowed in over 90 % of all active duty jobs in every branch of the military and their numbers have steadily increased every year (Kelley et al., 2002). As the number of women who serve in the armed forces continues to grow, so does the number of husbands who remain at home when their spouses serve on a deployment. It remains unclear whether the growing

number of husbands as military spouses will benefit from the same types of support programs that have successfully supported military wives.

The military is a culture steeped in tradition and has its own cultural norms. Rosen, Moghadam, & Vaitkus, (1989) described it as a greedy institution that requires nothing less than exclusive and undivided loyalty to its mission from its active duty members. The military demands that an active duty service member's first priority must be to maintain a state of combat readiness (Knox & Price, 1995). Military spouses are also expected to be committed to that mission and this is expressed through support of their spouse and the military community. Knox and Price suggest that the greatest stressors military spouses face are deployments which often result in a spouse experiencing depression, loneliness, anxiety, alcohol or drug use, and suppression of hostility or anger over personal or professional goals not being met due to the need to support the military mission.

Support for spouses, particularly during deployment, is a key element in ensuring the success of the military mission. It is more cost effective for the military to retain its current personnel than to enlist and train new personnel. Research shows that military retention is largely based on whether or not a spouse is satisfied with military life (Orthner & Bowen, 1982; Rosen et al, 1989; Schwartz & Wood, 1991). With this in mind, the military goes to great lengths to ensure that there are programs in place to provide educational opportunities, job-training skills, and to help find employment that is easily transferable (Burrell, Durand, & Fortado, 2003; Klein, Tatone, & Lindsay, 1989; Schwartz & Wood, 1991). Additionally, in one large scale study, when a spouse felt

supported during a deployment, she reported less stress to her deployed spouse, who then reported that the knowledge that his family was cared for during his absence allowed him to make more commitment to his work (Rosen & Durand, 1995). This research lends credence to earlier research linking spouses' attitudes towards the military in general with the active duty member's morale during deployments (Rosen et al., 1989).

Support has been shown to act as a buffer against the negative effects of the stress of deployments (Rosen & Moghadam, 1990; Bowen, Mancini, Martin, Ware, & Nelson, 2003). Specifically, support from family members has been shown to be one of the most adaptive coping methods available to spouses during deployments (Patterson & McCubbin, 1984). Deployments are a fact of life in the military; it is a matter of when an active duty service member will be deployed, not if an active duty service member will be deployed. Results of several studies indicate that military spouses who have access to friends and family with whom to share responsibilities are less likely to exhibit the negative physical and mental effects of stress (Moelker & VanDer Kloet, 2003; Wood & Scarville, 1995; Klein et al., 1989; Petty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler, & Williams, 1996).

#### Statement of the Problem

In 2005, President George W. Bush greeted a group of spouses at the Joint Armed Forces Officer's Wives Lunch with the following: "A time of war is a time for sacrifice, and the greatest burden falls on military families" (p. 1589). The comment is poignant, powerful, and alludes to a commitment to the military spouse. The literature review discussed in Chapter 2 demonstrates how the military has focused time, energy, and money into developing programs aimed at supporting spouses who stay behind during

deployments. However, the majority of this research has excluded the experiences of a growing population of spouses: husbands of active duty women. It remains unclear whether the growing number of husbands as military spouses will benefit from the same types of support programs that have successfully supported military wives.

### Research Questions

1. How do men describe the experience of staying at home when their wife is deployed?
2. In what ways do men experience stress during their wives' deployment?
3. In what ways do men cope with stress during their wives' deployment?
4. In what ways do men receive support during their wives' deployment?
5. In what ways was support available during their wives' deployment?
6. In what ways was support lacking during their wives' deployment?

### Nature of the Study

Because so little is known about the experiences of husbands who remain at home during a deployment, this study will be approached using a qualitative methodology. Specifically, the phenomenological approach will be used to explore the phenomenon from the experiences of those who live it. Because this group of military spouses is so underrepresented in the literature, quantitative methodologies were not chosen to analyze the issue. It is important to first understand the problem before asking specific measureable questions and trying to quantify any data collected. In order to understand what a husband who remains at home goes through while his wife is deployed, an individual interview was conducted with each participant. Through an in-depth review

and analysis of verbatim transcripts of the interviews with these husbands, I described the experience and examined how husbands seek out and utilize support.

The research participants were 3-10 husbands of women on active duty, stationed at an Air Force Base in the Midwest. Wives of participants were either currently deployed or have returned from a deployment within the last six months. Participants were initially selected through purposive sampling. Because husbands still represent the minority of military spouses, snowball sampling was also used to locate other potential participants.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how deployments affect husbands of active duty women who remain at home during deployments in terms of the support these men seek out. The literature review in Chapter 2 illustrates the experiences of a wife who remains at home during deployment and provides the framework for the previously established need for support during these times of separation. This framework was used to determine, through a phenomenological investigation, if the experiences of husbands match those of wives. This information can be used to determine if current support systems are adequate. Creswell (2007) suggests the use of the phenomenological approach when a researcher is interested in examining “a particular phenomenon and the common experiences of individuals with the phenomenon” (p. 103). The information uncovered is then used to describe the experience and give it meaning through a description of what was experienced and how it was experienced.

## Conceptual Framework

There has been a considerable amount of research done on the concept of stress, dating back at least to the 17th Century. During World War II, a sizeable amount of interest was focused on the emotional reaction to stress in combat (Lazarus, 1993). Since this time, many different researchers have been interested in how stress affects all aspects of those involved with the military. Lazarus's theory of stress can be used to help understand the experiences of husbands who remain at home during deployments.

According to Lazarus (1993), stress is any deviation from a standard or norm. When a threat of war is involved, a stressor often results in a relationship between a person and the environment a person perceives as exceeding resources and dangerous to his or her well being (Ryan-Wenger, 2001). To use this theory to understand what occurs with stress and military environments, one must take individual differences into account. Lazarus (1993) emphasizes the consideration of four concepts when describing the stress process: (a) the person-environmental relationship, (b) evaluation of the situation to determine if there is a threat or if the situation is benign, (c) coping process used to deal with the stress, and (d) the stress reaction.

Of the four processes, the evaluation stage plays a vital role in the stress reactions, or the effects that stress has on one's mental and physical states (Lazarus, 1993). The degree of this reaction is dependent on one's cognitive processes and, to be effective, it must continually change to accommodate shifts in the demands that naturally occur in the relationship between a person and the environment. There are two main types of coping: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Lazarus). Problem-focused



coping focuses on changing or removing the actual cause of the stress. Emotion-focused coping focuses on changing the way one interprets what is going on in his or her environment. This can include simply avoiding thoughts of the threat, a reappraisal of the threat into non-threatening terms, denial, and distancing oneself from the source of the threat.

There are three types of stress: (a) harm, (b) threat, and (c) challenge (Lazarus, 1993). Harm represents psychological damage that is already done; often times this is in the form of an irrevocable loss. Threat represents the anticipation of harm. When threat is present, mental operations are often blocked, resulting in impaired mental and physical functioning. Challenge represents demands; however, one feels confident of his or her ability to overcome the demands by utilizing coping resources. Challenges are often exciting and result in positive outcomes.

### Operational Definitions

*Active Duty Service Member.* A man or a woman who is serving on active duty in the United States Armed Forces.

*Deployment.* A military induced separation, often to a hostile location, with the express purpose of fulfilling an objective geared towards maintaining national security.

*Husband Who Remains at Home.* A man who is married to a woman who is serving on active duty in the United States Armed Forces.

*Wife Who Remains at Home.* Woman who is married to a man who is serving on active duty in the United States Armed Forces.

*Problem-Focused Coping.* A coping method in which a person attempts to remove the source of the stress.

*Emotion-Focused Coping.* A coping strategy in which a person attempts to change the way he or she thinks about how the source of stress is affecting him or her.

*Stress.* Deviation from one's normal state.

#### Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Because there is a pronounced lack of research on military spouses who are husbands, this research operates on the assumption that husbands also require and will benefit from receiving support during deployments, as do their counterparts who are wives. Even though the number of husbands who also hold the title of military spouse is growing, these men are still in the minority. Access to military husbands with a deployed wife will have to be coordinated with key military personnel and it is assumed that the men who chose to participate can be relied upon to respond to interview questions honestly and with sufficient detail to allow a rich understanding of their experiences. A delimiting factor set forth initially was the length of time between when the active duty member returned from a deployment to when an interview could take place. Even though the population of military spouses who are husbands is small to begin with, this delimitation was set in place to help ensure the quality of the data obtained was not eroded by having to remember small details of daily activity after lengthy periods of time had passed. It is then assumed that the participants will remember the deployment accurately.

The researcher had access to one Air Force Base in the Midwest and, because of this, Air Force husbands will be chosen as participants. Therefore, the scope of this research is limited to male military spouses of active duty female Air Force personnel. Because each branch of the military has a distinct role to play in the overall military mission, results may not be generalizable to other branches of the military. Additionally, results may not be generalizable to non-military couples that may experience periods of separation. Due to the qualitative nature of the research, this study is better equipped to offer thick, rich descriptions of the experiences of husbands who remain at home during a deployment, rather than a quantitative analysis of the phenomenon.

#### Significance of the Study

This research will contribute to the literature by providing a more complete picture of the overall experience of being a military spouse. Having a more complete understanding of the experiences of all military spouses will enable support programs to reach as many spouses as possible.

#### Summary

Support is vital to the mental and physical wellbeing of military spouses during deployments. A search through the literature reveals not only why support is needed, but also the consequences of not having support available. This search unveiled a startling lack of attention on husbands of active duty service members, a growing population of military spouses. At this point, little is known about how husbands experience deployments when they are the ones who remain at home, and whether they require the same types of support as do wives in the same situation. Qualitative methodology was

chosen to explore this gap in the literature with an emphasis on the phenomenological perspective with the goal of explaining the phenomenon from the perspective of those who live it on a daily basis.

CHAPTER 2:  
LITERATURE REVIEW  
CHAPTER 2:  
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The military is a unique institution, with its own culture, values, and traditions. Those who serve in the armed forces volunteer for service, and for many, it is a calling: a combination of “service, challenge, culture, and financial security that maintains their commitment” (Drake, 2004, p. 5). Other benefits of service include a retirement plan, 100 % healthcare for active duty and dependents, a comprehensive dental plan, educational opportunities, free housing, a measure of economic stability, and travel opportunities. These benefits do not come without some costly stressors. Military families are often faced with frequent relocations to include foreign locations, risk of injury or death, difficulty maintaining a career, subsisting on low to moderate income, and managing a home and children alone at a moment’s notice for months at a time. While military spouses receive the outward benefits the military provides, they often do not have the same sense of duty and challenge to help sustain them during times of extended separations, such as deployments (Drake, 2004).

Organization of the Review

As the review begins, the research strategy will be presented, so that articles discussed in this chapter may be located for future reference. An overview of the history

of the military spouse will be examined, so that a spouse's role in the overall military mission makes sense to the reader. Once this has been established, the dynamics of deployments will be reviewed so that stress from deployments is understood. There is an established need for support during deployments, which acts as a buffer against the negative physical and mental effects produced by stress, offers a way to cope, a sense of stability, a sense of community, and a way to increase satisfaction with military life in general. Finally, I will discuss the importance of understanding husbands as spouses and how they can best be supported.

### Research Strategy

Literature for this research was located using Academic Search Premier database and the broad search terms "military spouse"; "deployment"; "social support"; "satisfaction"; "separation"; "stress"; and "coping." The initial articles found were used to write a masters thesis entitled "The Effects of Perceived Levels of Public Support on Spouses of Deployed Active Duty Service Members". For purposes of expanding the research for a dissertation, PsycINFO was accessed, using the terms "military" and "deploy" in conjunction with a variety of other limiters such as "spouse"; "husband"; "support"; "adjustment"; "Air Force"; "separation"; "stress"; and "war". Reference lists in the articles found by this strategy were also reviewed for any relevant articles and many of these were also located through the use of either PsycINFO or EBSCO host, both of which were accessed through Walden University's Library system. The majority of literature revealed the focus of research has been on wives. Therefore, when this

review discusses the dynamics of deployments and the established need for support, it is based on the point of view of a wife with a deployed husband.

## Literature Review

### *History of the Military Spouse*

Military spouses have a rich and varied history. Throughout the years, they have been viewed by the military in a variety of capacities that began with neglect and have culminated in a form of partnership. A close look through the journals of early military wives who followed their Army husbands across the American frontier revealed many concerns that are not too different than those experienced today: problems with rough travel, domestic concerns, separation from their husband, and self-sacrifice (Baker, 2005). However, these wives also adopted a deep held faith in Army values such as duty, honor, and courage, as evidenced in their participation in the support of their husband and commitment to Army life despite the hardships they faced. During these early years, these wives were the first advocates of a military culture in which spouses were an essential element and “demanded to be understood as tough and resourceful members of the regiment” (Baker, p. 42).

In this era, the military had no legal obligation to provide for service member’s families, though spouses typically received half rations and children received quarter rations (Albano, 1994). This was a time of neglect of military spouses, despite all they did for the military and for its members. Prior to 1794, the military actively avoided any references to families. By 1898 families were recognized but were not encouraged; in fact they were viewed as an unwanted burden. At this point, wives began to increase

their volunteer efforts by organizing relief work and nursing the wounded to show that they were not a burden but would in fact be a benefit to the military (Albano).

In the period between the first and second world wars, the military was ambivalent toward families, but acknowledged an implied responsibility to a service member's spouse and children (Albano, 1994). During World War II, spouses lived in very poor housing conditions. A 1952 study conducted by Wickenden identified a lack of very basic social services for military families, which led President Eisenhower to select a committee to amend housing conditions for family members. This laid the foundation for future program initiatives.

Military spouse demographics began to change during the 1960s, as did the military's attitude toward this growing population; ambivalence moved toward acceptance and eventually concern as the unique features of military life began to come into the light of the public arena (Albano, 1994). Several trends can be traced throughout the history of military spouses: (a) from neglect to partnership, (b) from informal, categorical support to formal, universal support, (c) from local, private funding to federal funding, and (d) from a piecemeal approach to providing services to a planned, proactive approach to support services. Military spouses are now viewed as a vital part of the military mission.

#### *Military Spouse and the Military Mission*

It is more cost effective for the military to retain its current active duty service members than to recruit and train new members (Burrell et al., 2003; Klein et al., 1989; Pittman et al., 2004; Schwartz & Wood, 1991). Constant relocation makes it difficult for



military spouses to maintain a career. Results of a study focusing on how the military life affects spouse labor outcomes indicate that when a spouse obtains gainful employment, he or she is more satisfied with life in general (Schwartz & Wood, 1991). When spouses are satisfied with their lives, military retention increases.

Additional research has shown that the level of stress experienced during deployments and the perception of the military's commitment to caring for the needs of the family have been also shown to influence satisfaction with military life, which in turn also influenced retention intentions of active duty service members (Rosen & Durand, 1995; Knox & Price, 1995). Spouses who received support from the military experienced less stress and were more likely to encourage the retention intentions of their spouses. These results provided additional support for the vital role spouses play in the overall mission of the military.

The military recognizes that the stresses that military families face are many and include frequent moves, geographic isolation from extended family, large numbers of young children at home, and the threat of loved ones being killed or wounded (Black, 1993). Consistently, military spouses rank deployment as one of their greatest stressors (McCubbin et al., 1976; Rosen & Moghadam, 1990; Knox & Price, 1995; Ross, 2001; Michel, 2004). The military spends a great deal of time and money on family enrichment programs geared toward strengthening families and enhancing their abilities to cope with the stresses inherent to military life (Orthner & Bowen, 1982). This is done to enhance the interdependency between military effectiveness and family functioning. When active duty service members and their spouses are satisfied with their family lives, this is

reflected in improved military job performance. Additionally, reports from The United States Department of Defense (USDOD, 2005) indicated that a spouse's dissatisfaction with the military creates a strain on the military mission.

In order for the military to carry out its mission, active duty service members must maintain a constant state of combat readiness (Niederhauser, Maddock, LeDoux, & Arnolds, 2005; Rosen et al, 1989). This state of combat readiness includes the ability to deploy at a moment's notice. When a spouse is healthy and confident in the ability to care for one's self and one's family, the active duty member's state of combat readiness is enhanced. This aspect of the military mission is more likely to be met when an active duty service member is not constantly worried or concerned about his or her spouse's ability to care for himself or herself and the family during a deployment (McFayden, Kerpelman, & Alder-Balder, 2005).

Service in the United States military is currently voluntary and the men and women who serve choose to maintain the state of combat readiness. This commitment is very demanding and often results in placing one's life in dangerous situations. Maintaining morale becomes an important factor in ensuring mission success (Rosen et al, 1989). A spouse's attitude toward the military has been shown to correlate with both morale and work commitment of the active duty service member. A positive attitude enhances morale and increases work commitment, whereas a negative attitude diminishes morale and decreases work commitment (Rosen et al., 1989).

The concept of a spouse's influence on morale is not new. Early roots of this issue date to the American Frontier, when wives often cooked and washed clothes for

soldiers (Baker, 2005). Today, military spouses lead the way in sending care packages and providing relief efforts worldwide. Enhancing morale can be done on both a large and small scale. For instance, on many military installations, military spouses boost the morale of young troops who cannot travel home for the holidays by packaging and distributing home-baked cookies to the dorms.

Military spouses are often called upon to help care for the mental health of active duty service members. This began during the aftermath of the Vietnam War and continues to the present day (Brown, 1984). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was a common residual effect of the Vietnam War and the military counted on spouses to provide socioemotional support for active duty service members with PTSD (Shehan, 1997). Spouses were vital during this time because many veterans did not feel comfortable in a traditional therapeutic setting.

### *Deployment Dynamics*

Deployment can be broken down into three main stages: predeployment, during deployment, and postdeployment (Figley, 1993; Moelker & VanDer Kloet, 2003; Niederhauser et al, 2005; Ross, 2001; Gambardella, 2008). The predeployment stage begins when the active duty service member is notified of the upcoming deployment. This stage is often associated with a wide range of negative emotions in a spouse, even though the spouse has known that a deployment is a distinct possibility. These emotions include anger, anxiety, fear, or depression (Ross, 2001) and are accompanied by shock and protest (Moelker & VanDer Kloet, 2003). As the departure date gets closer, the presence of these emotions often lead to a period of disengagement, during which time

the active duty service member and the spouse begin to distance themselves from one another (Ross, 2001). This is often accompanied by emotional outbursts, such as the shedding of tears.

The second stage, during deployment, begins when the active duty service member leaves and continues until he or she returns home. This stage is characterized by a state of emotional disorganization, a period of recovery and stabilization, followed by anticipation of homecoming (Moelker & VanDer Kloet, 2003). There are several observable factors during the first few days, such as changes to normal eating and sleeping patterns. Additionally, the actual departure of the active duty service member often is accompanied by loneliness and a struggle to confront and manage the adjustments of being alone (Wood & Scarville, 1995; Figley, 1993). By the third to sixth week, a spouse has established new routines for him or herself and children, thus entering the stabilization state of this second stage.

This marks the time where the need for support is the greatest (Ross, 2001). Normal routines are no longer applicable and life in general is in a state of flux. Public news reports are often filled with coverage from journalists who are embedded with soldiers, resulting in extended and real time coverage of the war (Ender, Campbell, Davis, & Michaelis, 2007). This increased and constantly accessible report of various conflicts can increase a spouse's anxiety over the safety of the active duty service member. In turn, this can lead to additional onset of negative emotions. Social support is often the only thing that remains constant in the ever-changing environment a deployment produces.

A key to counteracting negative emotions during this second stage is communication. Research overwhelmingly indicates that military couples who remain in contact during deployments experience fewer negative emotions during the second stage of deployment (Ross, 2001). Communication has been shown to increase morale and reduce feelings of isolation on the part of the deployed active duty service member (Bell, Schumm, Knott, & Ender, 1999). Additionally, communication paves the way for a smooth transition to reintegration and stabilization during the third stage of deployment.

The final stage of deployment, postdeployment begins when the active duty service member receives word that he or she will be returning home and can be characterized by periods of anticipation of the homecoming, the actual reunion, and finally reintegration and stabilization (Moelker & VanDer Kloet, 2003). This phase is often marked with nervousness as spouses and active duty service members alike question the faithfulness of the other, wonder if things will be the same, and begin to experience cabin fever symptoms (Moelker & VanDer Kloet). Following the initial reunion, many military couples experience shared relief at being back together, but as they attempt to return to familiar routines used prior to the deployment, they sometimes find these no longer work well (Figley, 1993). Some spouses find they are reluctant to relinquish the increased responsibility held during the deployment, whereas others are anxious to lighten their load. Some active duty service members may feel no longer needed and are thus anxious to assume previously held responsibilities, whereas others may become overwhelmed if given back too much authority and responsibility too soon (Bowling & Sherman, 2006). This often produces a measure of strain as the spouse and

active duty service member strive to adjust to their reunion and remain patient during the reintegration period. It takes time to reorganize their lives into new family routines and return to a state of equilibrium (Figley, 1993).

### *Stress from Deployments*

Stressors inherent to military life have been researched for many years. Over the past thirty years, deployments have consistently been ranked as one of the greatest producers of stress (McCubbin et al., 1976; Rosen & Moghadam, 1990; Black, 1993; Kelley, 1994; Rosen & Durand, 1995; Knox & Price, 1995). Deployed active duty service members are exposed to a wide range of stressors including long work hours, war zone environments, and extreme temperatures (Vogr, Samper, King, D., King, A., & Martin, 2008). A spouse remaining at home is also exposed to a variety of stressors, including constant concern over the safety and wellbeing of the active duty service member (Faber, Wilerton, Clymer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2008). A spouse also faces an immediate increase in responsibilities and a decrease in emotional support (Gambardella, 2008). Additionally, spouses are faced with uncertainty over the safety of the active duty member and a lack of regular communication (Induk, Kawamuru, Jerney-Davis, Kim, Paphael, & Lau, 2005). This often results in feelings of anxiety, anger, and depression, which can then in turn result in physical illnesses (Rohall, Weschsler-Segal, & Segal, 1999). Common complaints from spouses during deployments include loneliness, lack of companionship, and a lack of social outlets, as well as difficulties making decisions, disciplining children, and handling finances (Black, 1993).

It is important to note that over the last thirty years, those ranking deployments as one of the greatest producers of stress have been women whose husbands have been deployed. The complaints described above may or may not be relevant to a man. For the purpose of the current study, it is assumed that husbands who remain at home experience the same stressors as the wives who have ranked deployment-related stressors so high.

According to McCubbin (1995) there are four themes common to all military families. First, change is inevitable, as all families will face difficult situations. Second, coping strategies will ultimately emerge as families go through these difficult situations. Third, developing close relationships with friends and other family members will aid families in developing these coping strategies. Finally, the coping strategies themselves will undergo change and evolve as new difficult situations are faced. The changes that are evident through all four aspects can either help families adjust for the short term or for the long term.

McCubbin (1995) illustrated this concept through the Double ABC-X Model where A is a stressor, B is a resource, C is a family's relationship between stressor and resource, and X is a crisis. A can be any form of stress that a family is faced with. B can be a personal skill, a communication skill, or support from people or institutions. A crisis is defined simply as disorganization and refers to either immobilization or incapacitation (McCubbin, 1995; Black, 1993). In the Double ABC-X Model, A, B, and C occur twice, prior to the onset of a crisis, resulting in a pile up of stressors. This pile up has a pre-crisis and a crisis stage, which happen as A, B, and C interact each time (Moelker & VanDer Kloet, 2003; Patterson & McCubbin, 1984). Using deployment as both the

change a family will face and a stressor, A, the following scenario illustrates the Double ABC-X Model:

A1: normal stress associated with military life.

B1: any resource a spouse finds beneficial and available to help cope.

C1: a spouse's perception of the ability of the resource to act as a buffer to the stressor.

A2: a spouse receives word that the active duty service member will be deployed. All of the additional stressors discussed in the dynamics of deployments are added to the normal stresses of everyday military life.

B2: any resource a spouse finds beneficial and available to help cope with deployments.

C2: a spouse's perception of the ability of the available resources to act as a buffer to the stressor.

It is the pile-up of stressors that occurs when a family receives word of a deployment that often results in a crisis. A spouse's ability to adapt to the changes brought about by the deployment depends completely on how well a spouse uses the resources available to the him or her to alleviate the stressors. Lavee, McCubbin, and Patterson (1985) illustrate how the Double ABC-X Model works with military families in a large-scale study of over 1000 Army families relocating to a foreign country. Stress came in the form of relocation and the resource used to counteract the stress was social support. It was assumed that the presence of social support would buffer the negative effects of the strain of relocation. Results of the study indicated that social support was positively correlated with a family's ability to adapt to a new environment. Additionally, families with good communication skills were found to have more flexibility and



established new family routines more quickly than families with poor communication skills. Even though the husbands in this large-scale study were the active duty members and not the spouse, they too benefited from availability of and utilization of support systems. This indicates that regardless of whether a husband is the active duty member or the one who remains at home, he would benefit from having an established support network in place.

Three patterns of coping behavior emerge through a review of the Double ABC-X Model: (a) management of family stability and individual family member's anxiety, (b) acquisition of social support in the form of family members and the community, and (c) an attack on the stressor (Patterson & McCubbin, 1984). Military deployments are a way of life for the active duty service member and for the spouse who remains at home. It is not a matter of if a deployment will occur, but when a deployment will occur. When the active duty service member leaves, the spouse shoulders all family responsibilities. This increase in responsibilities produces specific stressors that might not have existed before such as household and automobile repairs, paying bills, and managing the influx of negative emotions such as loneliness and fear (Black, 1993; Scarville, 1995). These stressors are increased once again when children are involved. In addition to becoming a single parent, the military spouse must also deal with a child's emotional and behavioral reaction to the departure of the active duty service member, which often includes defiance, depression, anxiety, and difficulties at school (Kelley, 1994).

Black (2001) defines a crisis as a change that is so overwhelming that a person is immobilized or incapacitated. Over 40,000 military spouses who remained at home

during deployments that occurred during Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield were studied with the intent of creating better ways to deal with the stressors they face. The first ABC cycle is the military lifestyle characterized by frequent moves, geographic isolation from extended family, and a high incidence of young children in the home. The second ABC cycle is a military deployment. Two distinct resources were found to help spouses cope with the separation of deployment: (a) integration, and (b) flexibility. Integration included finding other spouses with common interests and forming a cohesive support unit, while flexibility was defined as the ability to adapt to daily changes. Black concluded that support groups should be the foundation of any intervention aimed at helping spouses cope with deployments.

Both the military and the family can be called greedy institutions because they both seek undivided loyalty from their members (Rosen et al., 1989; Bourg & Segal, 1999; Drake, 2004; Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003). The time and attention that each place on their members competes with the role of the opposing institution and attempts to reduce the claims it places on the member. In other words, the military seeks exclusive claims on the active duty service member; they are not only expected to be ready to deploy at a moment's notice, but there is no such thing as a 'normal' workweek. In order to fulfill its mission, the military requires its members to adopt the motto, 'service before self', which can also be phrased as 'service before family'. Active duty service members have taken an oath to obey orders, and to disobey is not an option regardless of how one feels, of personal beliefs or opinions, or even of political or social ideals.

The family expects the active duty service member's time and attention as well; not only during emergencies, but also for everyday needs such as doctor's appointments, school functions, and sporting events. In today's society, men and women each spend relatively equal amounts of time and energy for the day to day running of a family. Since the early 1980s, dual income families have been on the rise and household responsibilities and parenting are shared between men and women (Orthner & Bowen, 1982).

Each of these greedy institutions can cause conflicts with the other as they compete for the time and attention of the active duty service member, forcing him or her to choose between military responsibilities or family responsibilities ((McFayden et al, 2005). In 1997, Bowen, Orthner, and Bell surveyed over 11, 000 military couples in an effort to understand how these families coped with stress and crisis associated with military life. Results indicated that the key to a spouse's ability to adapt to the competing demands of the military and of the family were directly related to the active duty service member's ability to balance between the demands of each institution. When the active duty service member was able to provide a satisfactory balance between work and home, a spouse was more satisfied with life in the military and was more likely to support the retention intentions of the active duty service member.

Individual abilities to divide time and attention between work and home vary and can be illustrated using the Work-Family Fit model. Here, family includes all aspects of the social, physical, and emotional needs a family has, and work refers to the requirements and backing of the military. This model explores the demands and rewards

of work and family, with “fit” occurring by successfully balancing between the two (McFayden et al, 2005). This concept becomes important for the military because research shows that if an employer is sensitive to the needs of its worker’s families, the employee will be happier, resulting in better work performance over a longer period of time (Pittman et al, 2004). With regard to the military, fit is enhanced when the family is prepared to cope with long and frequent separations, relocations, and the threat of injury and death. Fit is also enhanced when the military is prepared to provide the family with support and rewards designed to enhance the balance between work and family. Active duty service members often spend long hours at work on rotating shift work, and leave home on temporary duty assignments to both stateside and overseas locations. Military rewards can include an all encompassing health care program, free housing, childcare at a reduced cost, as well as schedule flexibility to accommodate those doctor’s appointments, school activities, and sporting events, (McFayden et al., 2004).

When conflicts to arise between the military and the family they most often involve time and result in emotional strain (Drake, 2004). For example, if an active duty service member works 16-hour shifts for multiple days, as is often the case, it is likely that he or she will go home in an exhausted state without the ability to fully participate in family activities because he or she must get up early and do it again the next day. If the scenario is reversed and the active duty service member is confronted with multiple stressors at home that require large amounts of time and attention, the likelihood that he or she will perform job duties well is diminished. Work-family fit requires flexibility

when faced with stressors from either work or family because a deficiency in one area directly correlates with negative performance and satisfaction in the other area.

Active duty military members are more likely to be an asset and help fulfill the military mission when they are not constantly worried about their family (McFayden et al., 2005). A recent study of Army spouses with deployed soldiers revealed that the fit between work and family was enhanced when the spouse understood the soldier's specific duty and location, and when the spouse perceived that the Army provided support for the family (McFayden et al., 2005). When the Army recognized family demands as legitimate and provided support for a spouse to help cope with these demands, the active duty service member was able to maintain a high level of commitment to both the Army and to the family. This study provided validation for both the work-family fit model and helped establish the need for support for military spouses as a way to provide stability and a way to cope with a constantly changing environment.

It is in the best interest of the military to appreciate the legitimate demands of the family and to provide active duty service members with the means and resources necessary to adequately meet those demands, especially during times of deployment. On the whole, the military recognizes the stress associated with military life and understands that this is compounded when the active duty service member is deployed. In 2005, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) began increasing resources designed to support and strengthen families. Support groups for spouses of deployed troops are standard, existing family enrichment programs are being enhanced, and new programs are being developed

with the goal of providing skills and support needed to cope with separation during deployments.

*Established Need for Support*

The military is a hierarchical system: a unit made up of smaller units, which in turn are made up of smaller units. For instance, the military is comprised of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and the Coast Guard. The Army is comprised of battalions and the Air Force is comprised of wings each of which can be further broken down into more units. A unit is assigned a commander, who in many cases, resembles a manager in the civilian world; however these military commanders are not just responsible for work related matters, they are also responsible for the morale and welfare of the active duty service members and the families within their unit ().

These smaller units are the first line of defense for a military spouse in terms of support from the military. As previously established, deployments have emerged as one of the largest stressors faced by a military spouse. An analysis of over 50,000 Air Force active duty service personnel and their spouses revealed that support from one's unit enhanced the ability to adapt and acted as a buffer against the negative effects of the stress of military life (Bowen, Mancini, et al., 2003). Results of a similar study indicated that when Army wives received support from other spouses assigned to the same unit, this too acted as a buffer against the stress of deployment (Rosen & Moghadam, 1990).

Receiving support from one's family is also a highly adaptive coping method employed by spouses during a deployment (Patterson & McCubbin, 1984). Support was shown to provide a balanced approach to coping that resulted in fewer emotional

problems during the pre-deployment and deployment stages, and less tension during the post-deployment stage. Additionally, familial support was also positively correlated with a spouse's overall satisfaction with military life.

The military lifestyle affords spouses multiple opportunities to become proficient at establishing social networks with those around them and developing the ability to be both mother and father to one's children when the active duty service member is away (Drake, 2004). These social networks are one way spouses cope with deployment separation dating back to the Vietnam era. On a large scale, longitudinal study of military wives who experienced war-induced separation from their husbands during the 1970s, six main coping patterns were found to increase adaptability to separation: (a) seeking resolution and expression of feelings, (b) maintaining family integrity, (c) establishing autonomy while maintaining family ties, (d) reducing anxiety, (e) establishing independence through self-development, and (f) maintaining the past and dependence on religion (McCubbin, Dahl et al., p. 466).

More recently, Milgram and Bar (1993) surveyed women whose husbands were serving in hazardous locations and found that when they formed family support groups, they reported the use of emotion focused coping strategies. These findings coincide with Lazarus' theory of stress, and the women changed the way they attended to the stress of separation and in turn increased both self-esteem and sense of coherence thereby buffering the negative effects of the deployment.

The impact of a military-induced separation is not the same for every spouse, and coping patterns, though they follow a generalized theme, are individual in nature as well.

These coping patterns are a combination of a wife's perception of the stressor, individualized hardships faced during the separation, and a wife's access to and use of resources (McCubbin, Dahl et al., 1976).

Actively relying on the support of friends and family is an available resource that can be applied to any of the six coping patterns listed above. Results of a variety of studies indicate that spouses who form or renew close friendships adjusted better to the separation of deployments (Milgram, Orenstein, & Zafir, 1989; Black, 1993; McCubbin, 1995; Wood & Scarville, 1995; Moelker & VanDerKloet, 2003; McFayden et al., 2005). Reciprocal relationships can create surrogate families during a deployment and consequently increase each individual spouse's resources used to help cope with deployment-related stressors. These spouses are less likely to be affected by the negative emotions that often accompany deployments.

Military life is filled with constant changes and is never predictable. Generally speaking, active duty military personnel are stationed at an installation for an expected two to four years; however this can change from day to day based on the needs of the military. Deployments often are scheduled around a cycle or rotation so one has an idea of when a deployment might occur. This too, though, is based on the needs of the military, and active duty military members must be ready to leave on a deployment with little to no notice. Research indicates that support is a way to offer a measure of stability in an ever-changing environment (McFayden et al., 2005). A study of 60 military wives revealed that the ability to adjust to the challenges of life in the military, including deployment separations, is linked to the perception of social support from family and



friends (Klein et al., 1989). Additionally, the availability of support also resulted in overall satisfaction with military life and a willingness to support the active duty service member's desire to remain in the service.

Life in general is not lived autonomously. Human beings are social by nature, and having a strong sense of community is important as a coping resource to meet life's demands (Petty et al, 1996). A sense of community has been described as a feeling of belonging coupled with faith that one's needs will be met (Solomon, Mikulincer, & Hobfoll, 1986). If a sense of community is lacking, one often feels isolated which can exacerbate the negative effects of stressors. In order to establish a sense of community, there must be an emotional connection.

The military is a type of community unto itself. Active duty service members often put their lives in the hands of their fellow soldiers, sailors, and airmen, thus creating a very tightly knit bond. Military installations can also be considered unique communities. It is possible for a family to be stationed in a certain location and never leave the confines of the gated community. Everything one needs to survive is located on the installation: there is a grocery store, convenience store, department store, gas station, a place to worship, and restaurants. Wood and Scarville (1995) interviewed a group of army spouses at four different times prior to, during, and just after a deployment to see what resources these spouses used to cope with the deployment. Results showed that when an active duty service member is gearing up to leave and just after he departs, the spouse often fills the absence with negative emotions such as loneliness, anger, and depression. These emotions often manifested themselves with physical changes such as

fluctuations in weight, altered sleeping patterns, and headaches. Spouses who became active in a variety of community activities, including work, church, and forming friendships, adjusted better to the period of separation and had less difficulty reintegrating the active duty service member back into the family upon his return. This was labeled as a sense of community and was shown to also be associated with overall feelings of satisfaction with life in the military.

McClure and Broughton (2000) also found that a strong sense of community helped spouses feel satisfied with life in the military. As previously mentioned, when spouses are satisfied with their lives, they are more likely to support the retention intentions of the active duty service member. A spouse's quality of life is linked with military retention (McClure & Broughton). Results from this study also indicate that when spouses are happy and involved in community activities, the active duty service member's job performance was also enhanced. This research provides further evidence directly linking a spouse's satisfaction with the overall military mission.

Having a strong sense of community is also a way to improve confidence, build self-esteem, provide companionship, and be an avenue for emotional and instrumental help (Milgram et al, 1989). When a spouse has a strong sense of community, he or she is less likely to experience periods of emotional instability (Patterson & McCubbin, 1984). The generalized ability to adapt to the changes and challenges of deployments increases the stability and emotional and physical wellbeing of the military spouse. Additional data collected from a military community overwhelmingly indicates that when a spouse feels

connected to the military community at large, he or she is better able to adapt to the changing environment of military life (Bowen, Mancini et al., 2003).

The need to support military spouses during deployments has been well researched and established within the literature. Using a large-scale study of over 40,000 military spouses as a base, Black (2001) suggests that formal support groups should be at the foundation of any program developed to help military spouses during deployments. These social support groups should have a strong educational component to teach coping skills and to build resources a spouse can use during deployments. Additionally, support groups should focus on the needs of families, should provide child care during the meetings, provide an outreach to spouses who are isolated, develop skills to deal with grief, improve a spouse's self-esteem, build confidence, and also prepare spouses for the readjustment phase of deployment.

Military spouses need support in order to cope with the stress of deployment (Drummet et al., 2003). The military recognizes the pivotal role that spouses play in support of the military mission and have begun to place emphasis on family concerns (Agency Group 9, 2000). The main support systems used by military spouses involve close friends and family members and should be the cornerstone of all support systems developed for the military (Drummet et al.). Family Life Education (FLE) was developed with a military spouse in mind to focus on the well being of the military family and to ultimately prevent problems from occurring in the first place. The following six guidelines are at the core of each FLE course: (a) informal in nature, (b) promote

advanced planning for separations, (c) communication, (d) a spouse's work self-efficacy, (e) help in relocation, and (f) help for children adjusting to new schools (Drummet et al.).

Many times there is a stigma involved in accepting formalized help. FLE's would be informal: military spouses would be trained to support one another so that everything is informal. The entire process of separation is difficult, and FLEs would be designed to help a spouse prepare for all of the physical, emotional, and logistical changes that come with a deployment. Communication is a key component in family cohesion. FLE's would help spouses maintain contact with the active duty service member during the deployment. This can be through phone calls, emails, and web cameras provided to the spouses free of charge at a convenient location. FLE's would also focus on assisting spouses with finding employment. This could be done through the organization of job fairs or teaching interviewing techniques, or providing training, all with the express purpose of improving a spouse's work self-efficacy. Finally, FLE's should address relocation concerns and provide help for entire families to ensure that the move goes as smoothly as possible and the family settles into new routines and forms new social networks quickly.

It is clear that spousal support is of great interest to the military; however, there is a startling lack of research involving spouses who are male. As the number of female active duty service members grows, so will the population of male spouses. It becomes increasingly important to understand how husbands who remain at home can best be supported during a deployment. According to Conger, Lorenz, Elder, Simons, & Ge, 1993 men and women have different emotional distress as a result of stress. Men tend to

become aggressive and are at a greater risk for substance abuse, whereas women have a tendency to become anxious and depressed. Additionally, men are often more reactive to uncontrollable events than women are. It is important to understand the differences between how a husband who remains at home and a wife who remains at home deal with the stressors associated with deployments. If men and women do not respond to these stressors in the same manner, then having an umbrella support system is not beneficial to husbands. This research will add to the existing body of literature by addressing this gap and exploring how husbands who remain at home seek and experience support when their wives are deployed.

#### *Need for Support and Lazarus' Theory of Stress*

The phenomenological methodology was chosen based on its ability to facilitate exploration of individual experiences within the larger context of husbands who remain at home during a deployment (Creswell, 2007). Lazarus's theory of stress will be used as a guide to evaluate these experiences. According to this theory, stress is a demand that results in a relationship between the person and the stressor (Ryan-Wenger, 2001). A person will then go through a period of cognitive appraisal in which coping responses are formulated based on whether or not the person perceives the stress as exceeding the resources available to cope with the situation (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998). If the stress is perceived to exceed one's resources, that person often feels his or her well-being is endangered and this influences the coping strategy used. The evaluation process is comprised of two types of cognitive appraisal: primary and secondary. Primary cognitive appraisal involves the evaluation of the actual threat of the stressor while secondary

cognitive appraisal involves the evaluation of the resources available to cope with the stressor. Which coping method is ultimately chosen is then directly related to how each individual appraises his or her unique relationship with the stressor and the resources available to him or her (Mishra & Spreitzer). If the reaction to the relationship is fear, a person often exhibits avoidance behaviors and a variety of psychophysiological disorders (Ryan-Wenger, 2001).

According to Lazarus (1993), the history of stress can be traced back to the 17th century when there was an interest in how well man-made structures could carry their intended load, yet withstand the natural forces that could easily destroy them. It is interesting to see how the history of stress provides a picture of a military spouse and deployments. By using this theory, the interest is in seeing how well a military husband can carry the load of deployment-related events and activities while withstanding the forces that work to destroy him. Support then becomes a vital component to helping this group of spouses deal with the challenges associated with remaining at home during a deployment.

Lazarus (1993) postulates that in order to understand the relationship between an individual and the stressor, one must look at motivational and cognitive differences in each individual and his or her relationship with the stressor. Stress can be any form of hardship and represents a deviation from a normal state. Four concepts must be considered when looking at the stress-resource relationship: (a) relationship variables, (b) the evaluation of the relationship, (c) coping process used, and (d) how stress affects one's mind and body.

There are three kinds of stress: (a) harm, (b) threat, and (c) challenge (Lazarus, 1993). Harm involves psychological damage that has already been done and is often seen as an irrevocable loss. Threat exists when there is one feels that harm is imminent. When a threat is present, one's mental operations are often impaired. A challenge represents a relationship in which there are multiple demands but one feels confident in his or her ability to overcome them and effectively use the coping resources available. In addition to being dependent on the evaluation process, coping strategies are learned, deliberate, and purposeful (Ryan-Wenger, 2001).

Coping with a stressor is a complex process that, to be effective, must be adaptable as the relationship between stressor and resources change (Lazarus, 1993). Two main coping strategies emerge: (a) problem-focused coping, and (b) emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping occurs when one attempts to change or remove the actual stressor. Emotion-focused coping occurs when one changes the way he or she reappraises the stressor into non-threatening terms in order to remove the cognitive source of the reaction to the stressor. The evaluation process determines which type of coping strategy is employed based on the perception of whether or not anything can be done to change the situation that exists as a direct result of the person-environment relationship. When appraisal indicates something can be done, a person uses problem-focused coping skills. When appraisal says that nothing can be done, a person uses emotion-focused coping skills.

Research indicates that military wives who have experienced their husbands' multiple deployments have had many opportunities to fine tune emotion-focused coping

skills (Milgram & Beck, 1993). With repeated deployments, these wives are better able to suppress unwanted and upsetting thoughts and feelings regarding their husband's well-being, reduce loneliness, and meet the increase personal demands thrust upon them during a deployment. She is able to manage worry over her husband's safety and her desire for his companionship without it interfering with her ability to meet the demands of the situation. Additionally, a wife's self-esteem is bolstered each time she successfully employs coping skills, resulting in a belief that a deployment is manageable and thus it becomes a challenge and not a threat. Milgram and Beck also noted the use of emotion-focused coping skills was a means to increase self-esteem, reduce the frequency of unwanted thoughts, and provide an outlet for the wife's energy, time and attention. Psychological stress often results in physical and mental manifestations. Coping strategies are then a means to ameliorate the impact of a stressor (Ryan-Wenger, 2001). What is not known at this point is what coping styles husbands who remain at home utilize or what happens to their physical and mental wellbeing when support is lacking.

### Summary

This study seeks to understand the experiences of husbands who remain at home during a deployment. Support for a spouse during deployment can act as a buffer for stress, can increase one's ability to cope with the situation caused by the stressor, and reduce negative emotions that are often felt during the time of separation. When a spouse does not receive support, the resources available to aid with the coping process are greatly reduced. When support is lacking, spouses are more likely to perceive the stress of deployment as harm or threat, and thus the likelihood of physical and mental illness or a



dependency on alcohol or tobacco increases (Busuttil & Busuttil, 2001). Having access to support during a deployment is beneficial to a military spouse and the military itself. With this in mind, understanding how this growing population of military spouses experience deployment-related stressors and cope with them is vital to the continued support of the military mission.

## CHAPTER 3:

### RESEARCH METHOD

#### Introduction

The first two chapters described the established need for support on behalf of military spouses who remain at home during a deployment. Feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and depression often accompany deployments. The literature revealed that when a spouse receives support during deployments, negative emotional and physical side effects are diminished. The vast majority of research has been conducted with military wives. It is not known if military husbands experience deployments in the same manner as military wives. Furthermore, current support programs are designed in part from the research findings and are geared toward reaching wives who remain at home. Lazarus's theory of stress can be used to illustrate the ways in which a husband who remains at home copes with the stress of deployments and how he seeks out support.

This chapter outlines the qualitative research methodology used to explore the experiences of husbands who remain at home. Participant selection is discussed, as well as the ethical procedures used to protect their rights. Procedures for data collection, analyses, and verification will also be described, along with a detailed discussion of the step-by-step procedures that were used to conduct this study.

#### Research Methodology

This study employed qualitative methodology. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative measures should be used when the basic assumption is ontological and reality is subjective. The term military spouse is an umbrella term used to describe an array of

individuals who share at least one thing in common: marriage to an active duty service member. The term can be used in reference to any branch of the United States military, can be used for both officer and enlisted spouses, and can also refer to a woman or to a man. Because of the nature of the military, deployments are simply a way of life that most, if not all, military spouses will experience at least once. It is, therefore, safe to say that deployments are a reality in military life. However, the experience is subjective and varies with each spouse. The question, then, is what is the impact of deployment, with a particular emphasis on support, as experienced from a husband's perspective?

Within the qualitative methodology, several approaches were considered. The narrative approach would, in essence, allow a husband to tell the story of what it is like to remain at home while their wives are deployed. While this method would make for an interesting read, the goal is to do more than capture the story of one experience. The grounded theory approach was also considered as a way to explain the processes and interactions between deployments and the husbands who live through them. This was rejected initially because the goal was not to develop a theory embedded within the views of the participants. Ultimately the phenomenological perspective was chosen to describe deployments as accurately as possible from the perspective of those who live it (Groenewald, 2004).

Since little research exists about husbands who remain at home during a deployment, it is important to understand deployment-induced separations from the perspective of the men who actually experience them. Because so little is understood, it is hard to make any suppositions about the phenomenon; this makes phenomenology a

perfect fit. Phenomenological research does not begin with a set of suppositions nor does inquiry involve looking for answers (Groenewald, 2004); rather, it is discovery oriented and lived meanings emerge through the data collected (Giorgi, 2008).

Creswell (2007) also indicated that phenomenology is best suited for situations in which the goal is not only to develop a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, but also to aid in the development of policies and procedures. By studying several husbands in depth who have experienced deployments, the essence of the lived phenomenon emerged. The goal is to understand the experience as it is lived in every day life (DeCastro, 2003). By determining the essential structure of the experience and how the experience is lived by those who are affected by it, a synthesis and integration of these insights can be presented to the public.

### Measures

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe how husbands who remain at home experience a deployment and receive support. For use in this study, deployment refers to a period of military-induced separation, in which the active duty service member is a woman and the military spouse is a man. The deployment must have been ongoing or have ended within the previous six months. The literature review in chapter 2 provided a glimpse of what a wife experiences during a deployment and the types of support that have been shown to buffer the negative effects of the stress commonly associated with deployments. The husband's experiences were investigated using several broad, open-ended research questions. General open-ended questions were chosen in order to allow participants to express their experiences in any manner they

chose but also allowed the researcher to focus attention on gathering data that were ultimately used to develop both textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The general questions asked of each participant are located in Appendix C. Specific questions that resulted from the general questions from each interview are also located in Appendix C.

### Research Questions

The following six questions were developed using Lazarus' theory of stress as a guideline. According to Lazarus (1993), four concepts should be considered when looking at a stress-resource relationship: (a) relationship variables, (b) evaluation of relationships, (c) coping processes used, and (d) effects of stress on one's mind and body. Question one was designed to uncover variables unique to husbands who remain at home during deployments. By answering questions one, five, and six, an evaluation of the relationships was made. Questions three and four address the coping processes used, and question two determined what, if any, effects the stress of deployments have on husbands who remain at home.

1. How do men describe the experience of staying at home when their wife is deployed?
2. In what ways do men experience stress during their wives' deployment?
3. In what ways do men cope with stress during their wives' deployment?
4. In what ways do men receive support during their wives' deployment?
5. In what ways was support available during their wives' deployment?
6. In what ways was support lacking during their wives' deployment?

### Role of the Researcher

In the phenomenological perspective, a researcher need not be separate from his or her own presuppositions about the phenomenon, nor should he or she pretend to be (Groenewald, 2004). This researcher has been an Air Force wife for the last eleven years. During that time, she has experienced multiple deployments making it difficult, if not impossible, to be completely separate from the phenomenon. This insider's perspective of deployments provides first hand knowledge of the importance of support during the time of separation from one's spouse from a lived perspective. This presented both benefits and challenges for the researcher.

This inside knowledge enabled the researcher to develop a rapport with participants and to ensure that each individual felt comfortable during the interview. This allowed participants the freedom to share both the successes and hardships they faced during a deployment. Additionally, the researcher knows military culture, so the participants did not need to spend time explaining elements of the conversation, nor felt the need to put on a good face for the interviewer.

By having a lived perspective of deployments of her own, it was vital for the researcher to continually bracket any presuppositions she might have. These presuppositions could stem from personal experiences, previous research, and even from research methodology (Ashworth, 1996). Bracketing involves a continual process of putting aside one's personal preconceptions, however they are achieved, and becoming familiar with each participant's experience in order to develop a holistic view of deployments from a husband's standpoint. The personal nature of the researcher's

relationship with the research may be a potential source of bias; however, the semi-structured nature of the interviewing process and member checking helped to guard against this bias. Additionally, the researcher continually engaged in bracketing during all stages of this research, but particularly during data collection and analysis.

### Context

Data collection for this study took place at an Air Force Base in the Midwest. This base was chosen based on proximity to the researcher's home so that it could be accessed quickly and easily. In order to conduct this study, approval from the base Public Affairs office was obtained. Once obtained, the researcher worked closely with a point of contact in the Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC). The phenomenon this study sought to explore involved a military deployment. The A&FRC continually updates a list of active duty service members who are deployed. This list also contains the name and contact information of the spouses who remain at home. Additionally, the A&FRC currently implements support programs for the spouses of deployed service members and, thus, served as the most likely location to make contact with participants.

The majority of current support programs are held at on-base locations, such as the library, the community center, and the conjoined officer and enlisted club. These locations were potential interview locations for this study as well. All three locations have private rooms in which interviews could take place free from distractions; however, in an effort to ensure participants were comfortable during the interviewing process, interviews were held in a public location of the participants choosing.

### Participant Selection

Participants were chosen through purposive sampling based on both the purpose of the research and the judgment of the researcher (Groenewald, 2004). Inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to select participants. Participants were all men with wives serving on active duty in the Air Force; their wives were either currently deployed at the time of the interview or had returned from a deployment within the previous six months. Most research used in the literature review was conducted during a deployment with a few studies using data obtained up to one year after the deployment, though the majority of research done after a deployment occurred no later than six months after the return of the active duty service member (Rohall et al., 1999; McCubbin et al, 1976). The inclusion criterion of participants whose wife had deployed within the last six months was based on previous research standards as well as the need to ensure an appropriate number of participants could be located.

The A&FRC representative was instrumental in locating participants who met the criteria for inclusion. Contact information was obtained and the A&FRC representative sent out an initial email to potential volunteers inviting them to participate in the study. Details of recruitment procedures will be outlined later in the chapter and the contents of the e-mail can be found in Appendix B.

At the initial interview, snowball sampling was employed. The researcher requested names and contact information for anyone the purposive sampling participant knew who might be interested in the study and would meet the criterion for inclusion.



The researcher then contacted these potential participants and the same procedural steps were followed for making contact with these individuals.

A variety of researchers suggest a general range for the number of participants to include in a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2007). This number typically ranges from 3-30, with most researchers suggesting approximately 10 participants. Giorgi (2008) recommends 3 participants, for the more in-depth the interviews utilized are, the fewer participants are required. Additionally, because these interviews are lengthy, the differential meanings needed for analysis can be discovered with few participants. The goal for this research was to locate between 5-10 participants. Nine initial contacts were made; however only five men ultimately volunteered for participation.

#### Ethical Protection of Participants

The first step in ensuring ethical protection of participants was to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University. Approval was granted and can be found under number 10-15—09-0324274 and is good until October 14, 2010. Participants in this study were all males who volunteered to participate. They were not coerced in any way, nor offered compensation for participation. A discussion of confidentiality, risks and benefits of participation was discussed with each participant, and an Informed Consent Form was signed prior to the start of the interview. A copy of this Consent form can be found in Appendix A.

Very minimal risk of harm is associated with participation and is limited to feelings of discomfort by discussing details of the deployment. Participants were free to skip any question they felt uncomfortable answering and could discontinue the interview

at any point without fear of repercussion, and this did not affect their relationship with the researcher or Walden University.

If a participant encountered feelings of discomfort, he was referred to the Military and Family Life Consultant Program (MFLCP) through the A&FRC. The MFLCP is a short term counseling service provided free of charge to military dependents and no records are kept. The MFLCP employs Masters and Ph.D. level licensed clinical counselors and can be contacted 24 hours a day.

Confidentiality was protected in a number of ways. Once all audio recordings were transcribed and verified by participants for accuracy, they were destroyed. All transcripts and documents pertaining to the study were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. Additionally, no identifiers were attached to the stored files. Each participant was labeled with a letter of the alphabet and every corresponding piece of information was given the same letter. Not even the researcher retained information linking the participant with a certain letter of the alphabet. These files will be kept for a period of three years and then will be destroyed.

### Procedures

The following sequential procedures outline the steps taken to recruit participants, obtain informed consent, and to collect, analyze, and validate data:

1. Public Affairs Officer in Charge was contacted and a Letter of Cooperation was signed prior to sending an IRB application to Walden University. By signing this letter, the Public Affairs office gave the researcher permission to contact the A&FRC in order to obtain contact information of deployed active duty service member's families

after IRB approval was obtained. A copy of the Letter of Cooperation can be found in Appendix D.

2. An IRB application was submitted to Walden University and approval was obtained prior to any further contact with anyone associated with this research study. The IRB approval number is 10-15-09-0324273 will expire October 14, 2010.

3. Within two weeks of receiving IRB approval, contact was made with the A&FRC office, and an appointment was scheduled at the earliest convenience of the officer in charge, but within five business days, to meet and discuss the study and receive contact information for potential participants.

4. At the appointment, the researcher discussed the nature of the study with the A&FRC representative in detail and answered any questions she had. Contact information in the form of names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses were on hand at the A&FRC for each husband currently remaining at home while his wife is deployed, as well as any husbands who have experienced deployments within the previous six months. At this point, the A&FRC representative sent the e-mail invitation to participate in the study to those who met inclusion criterion.

5. After the appointment at the A&FRC office, the researcher contacted the base newspaper office and placed an ad, approximately 30 words, in the paper advertising the study and requesting potential participants. A copy of the ad can be found in Appendix D.

6. Within 24 hours of meeting with the A&FRC, an initial e-mail was sent to all potential participants by the A&FRC representative introducing the researcher, the study,

and inviting these husbands to contact the researcher individually. Contact information in the form of a Walden University e-mail address and a local telephone number were included in the email. A copy of the e-mail can be found in Appendix B.

7. The researcher responded to telephone calls and e-mails requesting further information or clarification from potential participants. Questions and or concerns were answered and face-to-face interviews were scheduled at a time and location of the participant's choosing that was convenient to both the researcher and participant.

8. The researcher contacted the base Library, Community Center, and Conjoined Club and obtained approval to use a private room at each facility for interviewing participants. Each facility representative was informed of specific dates within one business day of the researcher setting up the appointment with the participant so that the facility personnel knew to expect the researcher and the participant at the appointed time.

9. After waiting five days, the researcher requested another e-mail be sent to the entire list via the A&FRC representative, minus those who have already contacted the researcher, once again outlining the nature of the study and requesting participation. The researcher did not initiate any further contact assuming the men did not wish to participate. A copy of this second e-mail can be found in Appendix B.

10. Any responses to this second e-mail were addressed within 48 hours of receipt and contact with the potential participant was made in order to answer any questions and to schedule a face-to-face interview at a time and location of the participant's choosing that was convenient for both the participant and the researcher. These interviews also fell within the previously determined one-month time frame.

11. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher described the study and an in-depth discussion of the voluntary nature of participation, risks and benefits to participation, freedom to withdraw participation at any time was addressed; the Informed Consent Form was signed. A copy of the Consent Form can be found in Appendix A.

12. Once the Consent Form was signed, the researcher explained why it was necessary to record the interview, and approval to record was obtained by having each participant sign Consent to Audio Record Form. A copy of the Consent to Audio Record Form can be found in Appendix A.

13. Once all signatures were obtained, a few minutes were spent developing a rapport with each participant prior to the start of the interview. This was done to break the ice and help participants feel more at ease talking to the researcher.

14. Once rapport was developed, the researcher turned on the audio recording, and the interviews began, using open-ended questions. Questions asked of each participant can be located in Appendix C. However, due to the unstructured nature of the interviews, a variety of follow up questions were asked during the interview based on individual conversations. A list of additional questions asked to individual participants can also be located in Appendix C.

15. At the conclusion of the interview participants were asked for their help in the validation process at two separate times over the next several weeks (Creswell, 2007). The first review was of a summary of the interview. Participants were informed to expect to receive a written summary of the transcribed interview within five business days of the interview and were asked to verify the accuracy of the researcher's understanding of his

individual experience with deployment and support. The second review could be expected to take place within the following six to eight weeks. Participants were asked to judge the accuracy and credibility of meaning units and thematic index discovered through a review of all the data obtained. Unless the participants ask for an alternate method of communication, both reviews were conducted via e-mail.

16. Additionally, before participants left, they were asked to write an informal essay, which described their feelings and or perspectives of being the one who remains at home during the deployment. This would be done completely anonymously and no one, not even the researcher, would know who wrote each essay. Each participant was given a letter of instruction and a self-addressed stamped envelope to return the essay in, ensuring the anonymous nature of the essays. A copy of this instructional letter can be located in Appendix C.

17. Field notes were written by the researcher no later than the morning after each interview and included observational, theoretical, and methodological notes, as well as an end of field day summary (Groenewald, 2004).

18. Audio recordings of each interview were transcribed within 48 hours of individual interviews and no identifying information was attached to the transcriptions. A detailed explanation of the transcription process will be discussed in the data analysis section of this chapter. Once the interview was transcribed, the audio recording was deleted.

19. Transcripts were read and a summary written immediately following transcription and e-mailed to the corresponding participant for his verification prior to the five-day limit noted in number 15.

20. Participants were reminded in the e-mail containing the summary to verify the accuracy of the researcher's understanding of his individual experience with deployment and support. If the participant recommended revisions, changes were made and resubmitted to participants for verification. This process was repeated until participants are satisfied that the researcher has captured the experiences accurately. A copy of this e-mail can be found in Appendix B.

21. At the conclusion of the one-month time frame all interviews were transcribed and summaries verified by participants. The researcher and an independent coder searched through the data for themes and began the explication process. At the conclusion of this process, participants were e-mailed summaries of the meaning units and thematic index developed for their review. Any comments made by the participants were taken into account during the remainder of the data verification process.

22. A Letter of Appreciation for participation and a copy of the approved dissertation will be e-mailed to each participant at the successful completion of the dissertation process. This letter can be found in Appendix B.

### Data Collection

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with each participant and essays written anonymously by participants. The interview focused on select open-ended

questions that allowed participants freedom to answer in any manner they see fit. Each interview was conducted at a location of the participant's choosing at a convenient time for both the participant and the researcher. Three interviews were conducted at the base library and two interviews occurred on the telephone. To begin each interview, a few minutes were spent with each participant obtaining informed consent. After the Consent Form was signed, a few minutes were spent developing rapport with each participant. According to Groenewald (2004), phenomenological research is best achieved using informal interviews in which each person involved is engaged in a dialogue about a topic of mutual interest. By spending a few moments developing rapport, the researcher hoped to help participants feel more at ease with the interview process and ensure that they felt free to share their experiences with someone who understands and cares.

Six broad, open-ended questions were designed to correspond with the purpose of this research and were clustered around three themes developed to explore meaning from the participant's perspective and not the researcher's: (a) experiences, (b) support, and (c) coping (Aspers, 2004). These themes were used in conjunction with Lazarus's theory of stress to design an interview guide to ensure the interview addresses every aspect the researcher wanted to cover yet allow for variation between participants. To begin with, each participant was asked to share as much as he was comfortable about his deployment experiences. This interview question corresponded to the first research question (how do men describe the experience of staying home when their wife is deployed). It is expected that each participant will bring varying answers that can then be used to paint an overall picture of how men experience deployments when they are the ones who remain at home.



This data can then be compared to research findings describing commonalities among wives who experience deployments. For instance, research indicates that wives typically experience loneliness, depression, fear, anger, anxiety, and physical illnesses as a result of their husband's deployment (McCubbin et al., 1976; Rosen & Moghadam, 1990; Rohall, et al., 1999; Fals-Stewart & Kelley, 2005). It is not known if men experience these same responses.

After a discussion of their general experiences, participants were all asked about the primary stressors faced during the deployments. This second interview question corresponded with the second research question (in what ways do men experience stress during their wife's deployment?). It is again expected that participants answers will vary and can then be used to describe the stress accompanied with deployments in general terms. The third research question also deals with support, but corresponded with the sixth research question (in what ways do men cope with the stress they experience during their wife's deployment). Participants were asked about the primary ways in which they dealt with the challenges described in the third interview question.

The remaining interview questions asked for a description of any support received from organized support groups, which corresponds with the third, fourth, and fifth research questions (in what ways to men receive support during a deployment, and whether or not that support available or lacking during their wife's deployment). Participants were also asked what advice they would give to a new Air Force husband whose wife is about to deploy for the first time and seeks to answer research question six

(in what ways to men cope with the stress they experience during their wife's deployment). Each of the six interview questions can be located in Appendix C.

Each interview was recorded using a digital audio recording device that will convert discussions between the researcher and participants into MP3 files. These files were downloaded onto the researcher's personal computer and transcribed verbatim for future use during the data analysis stage. An initial summary was made of each transcript and e-mailed to the appropriate participant for his review and approval.

In addition to the audio transcription, the researcher kept a written log during the interview, as well. According to Aspers (2004), understanding requires both verbal and nonverbal communication. Therefore, this log focused less on what the participants said and more on non-verbal communication cues such as mannerisms, hesitancy in answers, and observations made during the entire interview. This log was written on an interview guide that the researcher took to each interview. This provided consistency among all the notes taken during the interviews. These logs were then scanned into the researcher's home computer and kept with each corresponding transcript, with no identifying information attached to the log.

At the conclusion of each interview, participants were presented with a letter asking them to write an anonymous essay to be mailed in a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the researcher's home. This letter can be found in Appendix C. Participants were asked to write down their perspective and or feelings of being the one who remains at home during a deployment. Essays did not need to be in any format, nor were participants to worry about spelling or grammar. Rather the emphasis was to be on the

participants' feelings about remaining at home during a deployment in general, and specifically how these men received support during this time. The purpose of the essays was to provide another layer of information to supplement the interview data with thus providing for triangulation during the data gathering stage (Creswell, 2007). Since no identifying information was provided, the essay that was returned was stored in a separate file entitled "Essays" on the researcher's home computer in a password protected file. The researcher only received one essay in the mail. It was a short summary of the interview process and did not provide any additional information.

Each transcript and log was stored in a file that corresponded to the participant and protected by a password known only to the researcher. The participant's name was not used to identify individual files. Instead of any identifier, the researcher labeled the participants with letters of the alphabet. Each file consisted of the interview transcription, scanned logs of the interview process, and a summary of the interview to be e-mailed to individual participants.

### *Data Analysis*

Following the advice of Groenewald (2004), Holroyd (2001), and Giorgi (2008), data in the phenomenological sense is not analyzed as much as it is explicated. Analysis typically refers to breaking information into separate parts, whereas explication investigates the phenomenon as a whole. In keeping with the theme of capturing the essence of a phenomenon, the explication process consisted of seven steps: (a) bracketing presuppositions, (b) reading the transcriptions and essays, (c) delineating meaning, (d) organizing meaning into units, (e) identifying general themes, (f) forming a thematic

index, and (g) participant review (Robbins & Parlavecchio, 2006). Both the researcher and the independent coder followed steps one through six. For the sake of simplicity, the term 'researcher' will be used throughout this section, but the additional coder was subject to the same standards set forth here.

The first step began with the researcher bracketing presuppositions (Ashworth, 2004; Smith & Thomasson, 2005). These presuppositions include any prejudices that resulted from research, theory, or personal knowledge and or beliefs. It was important to bracket any and all presuppositions continually so that the experiences of the participants drove the findings.

In order to become familiar with the participants and their experiences, the second step in the explication process was to read every transcript and essay multiple times while continuing to bracket presuppositions (Groenewald, 2004; Giorgi, 2008; Holroyd, 2001). Akerlind (2005) suggests reading each transcript between 6 and 12 times while constantly thinking of the research questions. This step ensures that the study gets back to the roots of phenomenology by bracketing presuppositions and focusing on the experiences of those who have lived the phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004). The goal of continually reading transcripts was to understand deployments from the perspective of the husbands who remained at home thereby creating a rich description of the phenomenon (Robbins & Parlavecchio, 2006).

The third step was to delineate meaning by looking for significant facts within the transcripts and essays (Giorgi, 2008). After each transcript and essay was read several times, significant statements were underlined in pencil, with no thought given to how

they might relate to one another. Akerlind (2005) also stresses the importance of remaining open-minded during this third step so that meanings emerge from the data and not from any presuppositions the researcher might have.

The fourth step involved the actual search for meaning units (Akerlind, 2005). The significant statements set apart by underlined pencil marks were analyzed for meaning based on criteria of relevance for the phenomenon. This is also referred to as developing meaning units (DeCastro, 2003; Groenewald, 2004). Relevant statements included those that discuss similarities between the transcripts and essays on the overall experience of deployment, support, stress, challenges, and successes. Different colors were then used to highlight each category of relevant statements thus clearly dividing the data into meaningful units. During this coding stage, there were three foci used while reading through the transcripts: (a) focus on meaning, (b) focus on how support was received, and (c) focus on what support was received (Akerlind).

The fifth step was to organize the meaning units into general themes. This was done using a spreadsheet system. The color coded meaning units were transferred into a spreadsheet and organized based on the three foci used to develop the meaning units. At this stage, any repeated or non-relevant statements were removed (Holroyd, 2001). By using a spreadsheet, the data was kept organized and made the remaining steps easier to achieve. Additionally, the use of a spreadsheet helped the researcher and independent coder compare meaning units and themes.

The sixth step in the explication process was to extract specific words that highlighted meaning and examine all the transcripts collectively to form a thematic index

(Holroyd, 2001). According to Giorgi (2008), this stage of phenomenological research is discovery oriented and attempts to describe lived meanings through the basis of examining essential meaning units in order to produce thick descriptions of the phenomenon. Thematic indexes were used to synthesize and integrate the experiences of all the participants to produce a textural description of what happened and structural descriptions of how the phenomenon was experienced (Creswell, 2007).

Prior to the final step in the explication process, the researcher and independent coder worked together to produce a final thematic index. Redundancies were removed and a consensus was reached. The thematic index was then e-mailed to participants for their review. This was done to ensure that the experience was described accurately and the textural description is such that a reader clearly understands the experiences of being a husband who remains at home while his wife is deployed. After each participant approved the thematic index, the researcher transformed the meaning units from the first person singular language used by the participants to third person singular language used in psychological research (DeCastro, 2003). These were then related back to the research questions and the data was used to understand deployments and support from the viewpoint of the husbands who remain at home.

#### Verification of Findings

Qualitative research typically seeks to validate findings as opposed to verifying findings (Creswell, 2007). This validation process is a way of evaluating the accuracy of the study results. Creswell suggests using at least two of the following validation strategies: (a) prolonged observation in the field, (b) triangulation, which is the use of

multiple methods to corroborate data, (c) peer review, (d) clarifying researcher bias, (e) member checking, (f) utilizing thick descriptions to ensure transferability, and (g) external audits. This researcher utilized triangulation, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, thick descriptions, and memoing (not mentioned above).

Each participant was interviewed in-depth about their experience with the phenomenon and was asked to produce an anonymous, written essay. These two pieces of information were used to gather data. Ashworth (1996) urges researchers to make no assumptions regarding the correctness or falsity of participant's claims. This indicates that there is always a chance that participants may put a positive or a negative spin on their experiences when they are conversing with the researcher face-to face. By asking participants to write about their experiences with no fear of what someone may or may not think about what is being said, they may feel freer to discuss elements they would not otherwise feel comfortable talking about.

Clarifying researcher bias was done on a continual basis in the form of bracketing. This researcher can be classified under the umbrella term, military spouse. She has been an Air Force wife for the past eleven years and has experienced multiple deployments as the one who remained at home. Because of this, she has first hand knowledge of the typical stresses associated with deployments as discussed in the literature review, as well as the proven need for support. There were times when the researcher felt supported during this military induced separation, and times when she did not feel supported and can testify to the buffering effect support has on deployment-related issues. The majority of spouses she has associated with over the last eleven years have been other wives;

however, in the short time her husband has been on active duty, she has witnessed significant changes within the Air Force. For instance, when she first became a military spouse, she joined what was then known as the Officer's Wife's Club. That name has since changed to the Officer's Spouses' Club. In the beginning of her experience with this club, it was indeed just for wives. However, she has been a member of several clubs that have husbands who regularly attended functions. The researcher was aware that this intimacy with the topic has the potential to cause bias and was vigilant during the bracketing process, that was done on a continual basis.

The use of an independent coder was used to ensure both validity and reliability of the data (Creswell, 2007). The use of an additional coder also helped ensure that the researcher bracketed her presuppositions and accurately described deployments from the perspective of the husbands who live them.

Member checking was conducted twice throughout the data collection and explication processes. The first form of member checking was done immediately following the interview and coincided with Creswell's (2007) concept of member checking, which includes asking participants to examine rough drafts. By summarizing the interview the researcher sought clarification from participants and ensures that there were no miscommunications. It also was a way for the researcher to engage in another form of bracketing. By getting the participants approval of the essence of the interview, the researcher ensured the data came from participants and not from any form of presupposition. The second form of member checking involved a review of the themes that emerged from the explication stage. Creswell defines this as *writ large* and suggests



that participants play an active role in the entire study, not just the data collection stage. Participants were asked to analyze the themes both for accuracy and for anything that might be missing.

Thick descriptions, according to Creswell (2007), involve the use of details that elicit feelings, actions, and meanings as experienced by those who live the phenomenon. Verbatim transcripts and hand-written words produced by the participants themselves provided many details that were used to describe their experiences in a vivid manner, and that enhanced understanding of this growing population within the military spouse community. Quotes from individual participants were used to illustrate overall themes found and provided the reader with an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon from those who live it on a daily basis. Additionally, the log that the researcher kept during the interviews was also used to help provide a face to the men who participated in this study.

Memoing is a validation procedure described by Groenewald (2004) that was used to provide a balance between descriptive and reflexive data. In addition to keeping a log on the standardized interview guide, the researcher kept a journal in which she wrote observational notes (ON), theoretical notes (TN), methodological notes (MN), and analytical memos (AM) as described by Groenewald. The abbreviations always preceded written entries so that they were easily found later. Observational notes were simply comments on what happened and were not in any structured format. Theoretical notes were those in which the researcher reflected on various experiences throughout the entire data collection, analysis, and verification processes. Methodological notes included

reminders, critiques of herself, and instructions on what could be done differently, better, or not at all. Analytical memos were written at the end of each day in the field gathering data and were also unstructured. This information was used to enhance a greater understanding of how husbands who remain at home receive support during deployments.

### Summary

Since research involving husbands of active duty military members is in its infancy, this chapter was as specific as possible in order to facilitate replication from future researchers. In keeping with the phenomenological tradition, this study was structured in such a way as to determine the lived experience of the participants. Using semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ensure that appropriate data was gathered in order to answer research questions while allowing participants the freedom to discuss their experiences in their own terms. Additionally, the use of an independent coder helped ensure that the descriptions comprised were both valid and reliable.

## CHAPTER 4:

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

Historically, the United States military has been a predominantly male fighting force. Today, women are capable of holding over 90 % of the jobs available in the armed forces (Kelly et al., 2002). This increase in available jobs for women brings with it an increase in the number of male spouses who remain at home when women deploy. The need for support for spouses who remain at home during these military induced separations has been established in the literature (Bowen & Orthner, 1986; McCubbin, 1995; McFadyen, Kerpelman, & Alder-Balder, 2005; Pittman, Kerpelman & McFayden, 2004; Wood & Scarville, 1995). Additionally, the literature indicates that support during deployments has been known to act as a buffer against the stress of separation (Patterson & McCubbin, 1984; Rosen & Moghadam, 1990; Mancini et al., 2003). However, much of the previous literature involving military spouses focused primarily on wives remaining at home during a deployment. This study sought to fill a void in the literature about male spouses. Five men were interviewed and provided detailed information about their experience of being the one to remain at home while their wives were deployed. Complete transcriptions can be found in Appendix E. This chapter describes how the participants were recruited; a brief profile of each participant; how the data were collected, stored, explicated, and verified; and the themes that emerged through the interview process.

## Recruitment

Because the intended participants for this study would likely reside on or around a military installation, the base Public Affairs Office was contacted for permission to gather information. The Public Affairs Office granted permission to contact the Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) and potential participants. A copy of this permission letter can be found in Appendix D. Upon IRB approval, the A&FRC was instrumental in locating participants who met the research criteria. A copy of the e-mail sent through the A&FRC can be found in Appendix B. Additionally, the base newspaper office was contacted and an ad requesting potential participants was scheduled to appear in two weekly editions of the paper. A copy of this ad can be found in Appendix D. However, it should be noted that the ad never actually appeared in the newspaper even after assurances that it had been placed.

Within three days of the e-mail invitation, two individuals responded directly to the researcher and interviews were scheduled. One interview occurred within two days of the e-mail response while the other interview was delayed due to local weather and occurred within one week of the e-mail being sent. After the first two participant interviews, the researcher asked for participant help in locating additional participants via snowball sampling. During this time, four potential participants contacted the researcher but ultimately decided not to participate in the study without explanation. Within approximately three weeks of the first completed interviews, two more participants were located via word-of-mouth and interviews were scheduled at mutually convenient times and locations. One participant found via snowball sampling participated in a face-to-face

interview, while the other participant requested a telephone interview. Approximately four weeks from the time the initial e-mail was sent, the final participant contacted the A&FRC for more information and indicated a willingness to participate via a telephone interview. After speaking with a representative from the A&FRC, he contacted the researcher and a mutually convenient time was established for the telephone interview. All participant interviews were completed within a five week time frame.

### Participant Profiles

In an effort to ensure confidentiality, participants were not asked identifying information during the interview and no names will be associated with the brief profiles that will be discussed. Participant A responded to the e-mail invitation to participate in the study sent through the A&FRC. After initial contact, a face-to-face interview was scheduled at a mutually convenient time and location. His wife had recently left on a deployment scheduled for an approximate six-month duration. He is on active duty status in the Air Force and remains at home to care for their two-year-old daughter. He also initially retained custody of his two pre-adolescent step-children but they have since returned to stay with their biological father for the duration of the deployment. He has been deployed twice, but this was his first time to remain at home while his wife deployed.

Participant B also responded to the e-mail invitation to participate in the study sent through the A&FRC with a phone call to the researcher. At this time, a mutually convenient time and location was set for a face-to-face interview. He is a civilian with no prior military service who has only been married for two years. His wife recently left for

a deployment scheduled for 365 days; this was his first time to be the one who remained at home during a deployment. He has two stepchildren who are grown and do not reside with him.

Participant C heard about the study through word-of-mouth, and indicated his willingness to participate. Through a telephone contact, a mutually convenient time and location was established for a face-to-face interview. He recently retired from the Air Force and spoke of his wife's first deployment from memory, as she had already returned. They have no children and he was on active duty status during her deployment.

Participant D was referred to the researcher through a mutual acquaintance as someone who would fit the study requirements and he was asked to participate via e-mail. The participant indicated a willingness to participate and a telephone interview was scheduled. Participant D is a civilian with no prior military service and spoke of his wife's deployment from memory, as she had recently returned. This was his second time staying at home while his wife was deployed. They have no children and he resided off base in a different town due to his enrollment in graduate school.

Participant E was referred to the researcher through the A&FRC e-mail. The participant made contact with the A&FRC prior to contacting the researcher to schedule a telephone interview. He is currently a civilian but was previously on active duty status in the Air Force. Participant E spoke of his experience from memory, as his wife recently returned from a deployment. This was not his first time to experience a deployment as the one who remains at home, but this is the first time his wife deployed after their child was born.

### Data Collection and Storage

Each participant was interviewed either face-to-face or via telephone as described in chapter three. Consent forms were discussed and signed at the beginning of each interview whether it occurred face-to-face or via telephone and each participant opted to allow the researcher to use any information within the final dissertation. A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix A. Signed forms will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home for three years. At the conclusion of the three years, all data will be destroyed. Within 24 hours of each interview, the researcher transcribed the interview and deleted the audio recording as detailed on the consent forms. Once the interviews were transcribed they were stored on the researcher's home computer and secured with a password known only to the researcher. Any identifying information was removed from the transcript prior to the verification process used by the researcher and the co-rater as described in chapter three. One of the five participants returned an essay in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided during the interview. The original essay was stored with the consent forms in the locked cabinet and an electronic copy of the essay was kept with the transcripts in a password protected file in the researcher's home computer.

### Data Analysis

Once the interviews were transcribed, they were printed with double spacing and explicated by both the researcher and the co-rater, according to the steps outlined in chapter three. For simplicity, the term researcher will be used throughout the remainder

of the chapter but unless otherwise stated, the term refers to both the researcher and the co-rater.

The first step involved bracketing suppositions, a process that was repeated continually in an attempt to ensure that only the experience of the participants drives the findings (Ashworth, 2004; Smith and Thomasson, 2005). Because the researcher is also a military spouse, conscious effort was taken when reading the transcriptions not to think about or compare personal experiences. This step was repeated throughout the remaining five steps.

While bracketing suppositions, the researcher read through each transcription a total of three times without explicating any data. This was to allow the researcher to become familiar with the experiences of the participants as well as to ensure that the focus of the data gathered reflected the experience of the participants (Groenewald, 2004).

Once this was complete, each transcript was read a total of six more times comprising the third step of the explication process. First the researcher read through each transcript with a pencil in hand to underline any statement that appeared to be relevant. In the fourth step of the explication process, the researcher searched for meaning units by color coding each of the following relevant terms: experience, support, stress, challenges, and successes. Transcripts were read five more times. The researcher used a highlighter to identify statements that corresponded to the five relevant terms. Once the transcripts were highlighted, the researcher began the fifth step and transferred the information to a spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel so that the data were organized



for easy reference. At this time, the researcher and the co-rater combined individual spreadsheets; duplicate information was deleted and any discrepancies were discussed so that both the researcher and the co-rater agreed on the data organized in the spreadsheet.

The sixth step was to organize the meaning units into a thematic index. The goal of this stage of the explication process was to discover lived meanings as experienced by these husbands who remained at home during a wife's deployment. The researcher and the co-rater worked in tandem to develop the thematic index depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

*Thematic Index*

Focus	Description
Experience	Lonely; Missed spouses' presence; Took on added Responsibilities; Concern over spouses' safety; Support programs focus on women: men to do fit in; Developed a routine to cope with separation.
What Support was Received	Self; Family; Friends; A&FRC; Technology
How Support was Received	All self initiated: keep busy; stay engaged; travel to family and friends; seek out companionship; attend child related support programs; avoid media; communicate with spouse via e-mail and telephone.

*Lived Experiences.* Each husband in the study was quick to point out that he missed his wife's physical and emotional presence and was left with additional duties during her absence. The main stressor expressed by the group was concern for the safety of the deployed spouse. This was such a major issue that each husband took active steps to avoid any media attention about the Global War on Terror (GWOT) or even the region where the deployment occurred. The group also included this when giving suggestions for new Air Force husbands about to face deployment for the first time. Only one of the four husbands ever attended any formalized support programs, yet even he agreed with the group that the current activities designed for deployed spouses were geared solely for women who remain at home. Because they did not believe the programs met their needs, these husbands were left to find alternate means of support. Support centered on family, friends, and technology and all were self initiated by each of the husbands in the group.

*Data Verification.* In accordance with Creswell (2007) data for this qualitative research were validated as opposed to verified using the following methods: clarifying researcher bias, member checking, triangulation, thick descriptions, and memoing.

Everyone involved in this research knew from the beginning that the researcher is a military spouse who has experienced multiple deployments as the one who remained at home. The literature driving this research topic indicates that support is a vital component for a spouse who remains at home during a deployment. With her firsthand knowledge of this need for support, the researcher expected to find this to be true for the participants. It was vital for the researcher to remain objective and not project personal experiences and expectations upon the participants. In addition to remain vigilant in

bracketing suppositions, member checking was conducted at multiple times and the researcher engaged the help of a co-rater.

The use of a co-rater provided both support for and verification of the data. The co-rater was also a military spouse who was stationed at a different base in an effort to further ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The co-rater is familiar with the military and the specific acronyms and programs discussed by the researcher and participants during the interviews.

A copy of chapter 3 and each transcription was provided to the co-rater. The co-rater then read the original transcripts; color coded meaning units, transferred data to a spreadsheet, and created a thematic index independent of the researcher. Once this was complete, the researcher and co-rater spent approximately 15 hours over a two-week period discussing individual results. Repeated information was deleted and disagreements were discussed until a consensus was reached thus producing the final thematic index used for member verification.

Participants were asked to verify the validity of the data at multiple points during the explication stage. The first point of member checking was done immediately following the interviews. The researcher transcribed the interview and sent each participant a summary of the conversation for his review and approval. None of the participants asked for information to be further clarified or changed at this stage. Once the thematic index was complete and agreed upon by the researcher and co-rater it was emailed to the participants for their review. Participants were asked to determine if they felt the index captured their experience as the one who remained at home during a

deployment. None of the participants believed that changes should be made to the thematic index.

Groenewald (2004) describes memoing as a method to balance descriptive data and reflexive data. The researcher took notes on a standardized interview guide during each of the participant interviews. Immediately after the interview, observational notes (ON), theoretical notes (TN), methodological notes (MN), and analytical memos (AM) were added to the interview guide. Within 24 hours of the interview the researcher returned to the memoing procedure and made additional notes and memos. These notes were then used during the steps outlines above to ensure that the researcher focused only on the information provided by the participants.

*Identified Themes.* The goal of this study was to understand deployments from the perspective of the husbands who remain at home. All five participants overwhelmingly agreed that experiencing a deployment as the one who remains at home is like nothing else he had ever encountered before. Participant E summed up this sentiment in the following way:

I don't know that any civilian, anybody who has lived their life on the outside, is truly ever really prepared for that day when your spouse goes off overseas and you're looking at three months, six months, a year or more by yourself.

Keeping the goal of the study in mind, three themes emerged from the data: a focus on meaning, a focus on what support was received, and a focus on how support was received. The findings are grouped according to theme and are followed by a brief description of what these themes meant using excerpts from the husband's perspective.

*Focus on Meaning.* In addition to the normal activities of caring for a household on one's own, the participants experienced feelings of loneliness and missed the physical and emotional presence of their spouses. The concerns about safety of one's deployed spouse increased the stress associated with remaining at home. Support programs did not appear to meet the needs of these husbands, as each of them expressed a belief that the programs were geared toward women remaining at home and consequently did not fit their needs. As a result, husbands quickly developed a routine as the primary means to cope with separation.

For each of the participants, preparations for the deployment began when the active duty spouse received word of the departure date. Each of the husbands had a bit of time to prepare for the deployment. For Participant A, this included a slow transition in the month prior to the deployment. As the departure date drew near, he began to assume all of the tasks associated with running a household. This way, if he ran into any difficulty while he was learning the tasks, his wife was there to offer suggestions. In addition to understanding this new role, the participant indicated he had a newfound appreciation for what his wife does.

The remainder of the participants each also prepared to assume activities that his spouse was previously responsible for. Participant B also included a description of the difficulties associated with obtaining and using a Power of Attorney, and attributed this as one of the biggest hurdles he had to overcome. The group also prepared for the separation by ensuring that the technology used to communicate with his deployed spouse was working. Each participant indicated that he spoke with his spouse either over

the telephone or via e-mail messages on a daily basis. Participant D indicated that this was a priority.

We bought a new computer for her to take with her that had a webcam already installed so that we could do video chats... You really need to try out communications before she leaves. Make sure computers work and webcams are set up properly. If you need an e-mail address get one and make sure you can send and receive e-mails. The key is making sure that all communication methods work.

When responding to the first general interview question asking the husband to share his experience while his wife was deployed, each participant indicated that he felt lonely at times and missed the physical and emotional presence of his wife. Participants A and E each have one small child, and even though each had constant stimulation through interactions with his child, he missed the adult conversations with his wife. Even though Participant E traveled home to spend time with his family, it was solitary at his house after his child was in bed. He would turn the radio on nightly and listen to Alice Cooper Live to get a type of adult interaction. Participant D expressed his answer with deep feeling and emotion:

You live with someone and share your life and you talk about your day only now she's gone and you can't just come home and talk to each other about anything and everything and nothing.

There was group consensus in response to question number two asking about what challenges were faced during the deployment. Each husband felt that taking on his spouses' duties in addition to his own was a challenge. They believed that paying the bills was the most challenging aspect of running a household. Participants C and D had to maintain two households as they were geographically separated from their spouse's home duty station. Participants A and E found caring for a small child both rewarding

and challenging. As the sole provider it was difficult to strike a balance between spending time with the child and having a bit of alone time. Participant A struggled to explain the situation.

Especially with single parents you've got to have that me time; whether it's a little bit and I'm not saying a lot but you have to have some and in a four month time frame. If you don't have any that kind of drives down spirits and things so that becomes more difficult when you're the single parent simply because you know you have to try to find a babysitter if you want to have me time so I think that was an additional challenge.

Participant E clarified this phenomenon.

You've got to really be on the ball and being a male you're not going to be on top of everything if you're taking care of a little baby especially if it's your first one. There's an expected sort of dopiness or expected stupidity and dumb stuff that you're going to forget or not anticipate.

The group consensus continued in response to the question about the greatest challenge that was not related to the actual day-to-day running of a household. Each husband listed concern over his spouse's safety as a challenge he faced on a continuous basis. Specific concerns included uncertainty over communication and whether or not the area in which the wife was stationed was safe. Even though each husband indicated he had the ability to talk with his wife frequently either on the telephone or through e-mail messages, there was a constant concern over how long this would be available.

Participant B stated that when his wife missed a scheduled chat or he had not heard from her through e-mail for a couple days he would tend to worry more about safety.

Participant C spoke of the media as a concern. With a deployed spouse one tends to become hypersensitive to what is on the news in the areas surrounding where your spouse is located. He stated quite emphatically, "The news media is not necessarily your

best friend.” Each of the other participants mirrored this sentiment. Participant D indicated that he not only stayed away from the news media, both verbal and written, he stayed away from entertainment that depicted anything resembling a military or deployment setting. Participant B explained that dwelling on the news media could make one’s nights long. Participant E began by stating that there is a lot of worrying involved in being the one who remains at home and further clarified that his main coping mechanisms were not listening to the media and trying to avoid external reminders of his wife’s deployment. Participant A summed it all up simply, “Ignorance is bliss.”

The group also reported that avoiding the media was not only for himself but for his wife as well. When they were able to speak to their spouse, she would pick up on his fear and concern and in turn this created stress for her. These exchanges created a cycle of each spouse feeding off the other’s concern and stress levels would rise for each.

When asked if he attended any formalized support programs, four out of the five husbands emphatically said he did not. The group consensus, including the husband who did attend support programs, did not believe that these structured activities met his needs. According to Participant A, there is an understanding that any official function is always for the wife. Participant B expanded on this notion by explaining that programs are geared toward women and are not for men at all. He went on to explain that even the names of the programs indicate exclusivity.

They are called “Diva Night”. I mean that pretty much tells you that this is not a guy’s thing. That’s what it says, “Join us for Diva night” and even if it were something I want to do, the name itself keeps me from going to it or even having an interest to it. It’s all really geared towards women I think.



Participants C and D both explained that he did not attend any formalized support programs because he didn't feel it fit his needs and it was not something he wanted to do. While Participant E did attend functions that focused on his child, he stated that he didn't feel he fit in and would skip anything that meant he'd be interacting with only wives.

All five participants stressed the need to develop a routine. Participant A expressed surprise at what a disruption to normal daily life the deployment caused. He did not anticipate such a difference in activity levels because as the one who stays at home, the environment itself doesn't change. However, as all five participants acknowledged responsibilities increased and the amount of time to get things accomplished seemed to decrease. It became vital for each husband to develop a routine. Having a set schedule not only seemed to help the time go by faster, it helped ensure physical and mental health. Many of the routines included taking personal time whether it was to work out or to engage in a hobby. Participant D indicated that scheduling time for himself was the best thing he could do for him and for his wife. If she knew he was taking care of himself physically and emotionally, she didn't have to worry about his wellbeing while she was in a hostile location. Each of the participants expressed similar sentiments as all five husbands had a tendency to fall back on the routines established at the beginning of the deployment.

*Focus on What Support was Received.* The group of men in this study overwhelmingly agreed that formalized support for spouses of deployed active duty members was not meant for husbands. Whether or not this is accurate, this perception affected how the husbands in this study received support. When answering question

number three: what were the primary ways you dealt with the challenges just described, group answers revealed the following types of support: from the husband himself, from technology, and from family and friends.

Developing a routine and monitoring media exposure were the two main things that each participant specified as ways they built support during the deployment. Each of these two things was personally established; the husband developed a routine for himself and actively avoided media exposure about deployment related events throughout the world. As the one who remains at home during a deployment, the lifestyle is very busy. Without a set routine, the participants indicated that time appeared to go more slowly and it was easier to fall into disruptive patterns. Participant D described this tendency.

Guys are vulnerable to “caving,” you know, closing the curtains and just staying in and surfing the internet or watching television, and that can be a problem.

Participant B indicated that he threw himself into his work and if he was not careful, he could stay in his house for days and lose himself in his job. Participants A and E further clarified that establishing a routine and following it rigorously not only provided stability for themselves, but for their children, as well.

As previously indicated, each of the five husbands actively avoided the media. The threat to the deployed wife’s safety was always in the back of each husband’s mind, but the group agreed that it was far better to hear about the danger after the wife was safely home. Each husband explained that it was important not to think of the danger. Participant A clarified that by not thinking about the threat to his wife’s safety he was not in denial. He knew the danger existed, but not having the constant reminder from the

media enabled him to cope with the separation. Participant C expanded on this by explaining that the media caused worry about things that you shouldn't be worried about. He further explained that if something were to happen, a husband would have immediate access to personnel from the base that would provide accurate and individualized information.

Participant E described why he chose to actively avoid external reminders of the activities in his wife's deployed location. He indicated that it would be easy to fall into a constant and frantic state of worry.

It's one thing to be a single dad in the course of a deployment but it's a whole other thing to think of fatherhood every frickin second, of every minute, of every hour, of every day of the week, of the month, of those seven months she was deployed...what if she doesn't come back and then I'm thinking of that situation where my son doesn't have a mom; that is the most frightening thing.

Technology was a highly important source of support for these husbands during the deployment. Each husband was quick to indicate that communication is the key to making it through a deployment as the one who remains at home. The participants had frequent contact with their spouses through the telephone, e-mail messages, or through video chats. As previously indicated, Participant D purchased a computer with web camera capabilities for his wife prior to her deployment. With only a few exceptions, each husband was able to have some sort of communication with his spouse on a daily basis. This ability to see her face and or hear her voice reassured husbands that their spouses were safe and being cared for.

In addition to safety, Participants B and D indicated that establishing an understanding about fidelity was critical. Participant D pointed out that upon departure,

each spouse was suddenly thrust into a situation that was dominated by the opposite sex. Understanding expectations of what was and was not acceptable behavior on the part of each spouse was key to coping with the separation. The ability to communicate on a daily basis removed the fear of infidelity.

Family and friends provided support for the husbands in the study. Participants D and E traveled back to visit family members during the deployment. Participant E explained that falling back on family for support helped make the deployment bearable.

I remember that first blizzard giving me kind of the wake up call, the realization of what exactly I was going to be up against for the next 6 months being by myself with my 1 and a half-year-old son in South Dakota. The location is what made it kind of difficult, you know. People get cabin fever just being stuck in a house by themselves and then on top of that I had my son and it was kind of scary. He's my first and only kid and I didn't know what to expect. It's the motherly instinct that everybody talks about being so important and being kind instinctively knowing what to do with babies but I don't know I'm not a mom so it was scary. It was scary that I would be going through this winter with or in a situation where I had to really be on top of the ball and not just have myself taken care of which was a snap, which I had been used to over the last ten years but being responsible for my son for my baby all alone without mommy in the winter and in the cold and that was daunting. I was like forget this especially during the holidays. Being alone during the holidays with our family in Texas was just not something that I was going to be willing to do so I drove down to Texas and I did Thanksgiving with my mother in law and I did Christmas with my mom and dad and then I drove back up in January and Rapid was still snowy! It was still getting blizzards and everything. But when I came back I felt recharged and not so isolated and not so alone. So I was very happy I did that. I was very happy that I got the heck out of dodge because if I was here I would have been driven crazy by the snow and the baby.

In addition to physically traveling to his family's home, he spoke with his family on a regular basis. Participants A and C, both active duty military members themselves, pointed out that fellow military co-workers became like family during the deployment. All five participants indicated that having friends functioned like your own support

group. Having a group of friends, or even one or two close friends appeared to help a husband avoid becoming isolated. Participants B, C, and D explained that it was very easy to become isolated without really trying. If one has close friends this was less likely to happen. Participant D explained that friends were there to drag each other out of the house and this was a form of social support. Participant C explained that friends were interested and wanted to know how he was doing, and how his wife was doing and this in turn is personally helpful.

Share with them about it. I got some really good pictures back so I would print them and so whenever you walked into my office there she is sitting in the hum-vee and people would ask the question, well how are you doing, do you need anything and sometimes just talking about it helps and I was always very happy when someone asked.

*Focus on How Support was Received.* Three broad types of support emerged from the data: self, technology, and family and friends. No matter what support was received, for all five participants; it was the husband who initiated the support. As previously discussed, each of the husbands specified maintaining a routine as crucial to the deployment experience. Without having a routine, time was perceived to move more slowly and the participants were more vulnerable to the threat of isolation. Staying busy and following a routine helped the group cope with the separation.

Avoiding external reminders about the hazards of deployment locations was a strategy that the participants actively used. Participant C indicated that the media tended to offer too much information and most of the time there was nothing at all a spouse at home could do about any given situation. Participant D took this sentiment a step further and suggested that he would have been a “wreck” had he known all that was going on in

his wife's location. Participant E clarified the phenomenon of media avoidance by stating that too much information made the situation unimaginable. The participants also agreed that by avoiding the media the deployed spouse was less likely to notice and respond to panic and stress during phone calls and e-mails and avoided increased stress, as well.

Because communicating with the deployed spouse was so important to coping with the separation, each husband was vigilant in his efforts to remain positive and supporting. Maintaining contact with the deployed spouse helped to alleviate worry or concern over both safety and fidelity issues. Being able to see his wife's face and hear her voice enabled the husbands in this study to cope with the loneliness caused by her physical absence.

Seeking out companionship was an additional way the group dealt with the challenges associated with being the one who remained at home during the deployment. Having a friend to talk to or work out with helped these husbands avoid becoming isolated. This also was a way to ensure the physical and emotional health of the husband while his wife was deployed. Each of the husbands indicated that having close friends provided them with their own form of social support. Seeking this support was vital to the group because each husband believed that support programs would not fit his needs. Participant B asserted that if you don't have that group of friends you would never survive a deployment. Participants C and D did not want to attend any of the formalized support programs because it didn't fit their needs, and each indicated that he did not want to draw attention to himself. Participants D and E also traveled home to visit family

members during the deployment as a means of coping with the separation. Additionally each of the husbands described speaking with family as a means of finding their own support.

When answering question six, what advice would you give a new Air Force husband about to experience deployment for the first time, each of the spouses reiterated the concept of self support. The group shared general pieces of advice which included developing a routine, scheduling time for friends and family events, engaging in a hobby, and recognizing one's own mental health. One interesting piece of advice was given by each of the five husbands in the study: don't be afraid to ask for help. Participant C put it quite bluntly.

Don't be an idiot! Don't be guy stupid about it because guys automatically think, well I don't need any help and I don't need anybody.

*Discrepant Findings.* During the explication process, the data revealed that some husbands experienced unique situations that couldn't be included in the group experience. Participant A found himself in a custody battle with his wife's ex-husband over his two stepchildren the day after his wife left the country. This conflict added an additional stressor, which, in his words, compounded the situation. He not only found himself in a courtroom fighting for his wife's children, but having to reassure her that everything would work out fine.

Participant B was newly married and new to the military. He adamantly expressed his dislike for the military in general and his base in particular. He did not believe that he fit in with military "manly men" and the military culture was completely different than anything he had experienced in the past. He and his wife had just moved to

a new base when she was informed of her year-long deployment, so being in a new area without his former friends was also difficult.

Participant C was in a high level Air Force position during the time of his wife's deployment and admitted that his experience with deployment was not likely consistent with experiences of the general population. Because of the position he held, he was confident that (a) he would be able to communicate with his wife and (b) if something were to happen to her he would be able to get to her location quickly. Additionally, he was also in a position to find out more detailed information about her location than one would get from the general media; although he was quick to clarify that after the first few weeks he avoided that information as actively as he did the regular news media for the exact same reasons. Too much information was perceived as not a good thing.

Participant E was the only husband in this study who attended any formalized support programs. Even though he wholeheartedly agreed with the position of his fellow husbands, that these programs did not fit his needs, he went for the sake of his child. He began describing his experience by stating that being with all the mommies got "old" but "I put my baby first so that he could get interaction with other little children his age or his size or whatever." He was quick to point out that if an activity did not involve children he would not attend because he did not fit in and it was always something that he did not want to do.

### Summary

This chapter outlined how the participants were recruited and interviewed, and summarized key findings. Each participant was either in the midst of a



deployment or his wife had recently returned from a deployment. No further criteria were set in place for inclusion. Results of the study indicated that these husbands provided their own support to include individual efforts, technology, family and friends. None of the participants believed that current support programs for military spouses met their needs and none indicated a desire to participate in an activity in which he did not feel welcome or included. Chapter 5 will provide an interpretation of the data, evaluation of coping strategies using Lazarus' theory of stress, implications for social change, recommendations for future studies, and conclusions.

## CHAPTER 5:

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

For those who have never experienced it, the military lifestyle can be hard to comprehend. Frequent moves, periods of separation from one's spouse, and concern over the active duty service member's safety are normal occurrences. Traditionally, women have comprised the bulk of military spouses because the majority of active duty military members were men. Since 1993, women have been allowed in combat positions and are currently eligible to hold over 90 % of all active duty jobs (Burrelli, 1996). With the increase in women serving on active duty comes an increase in husbands who remain at home during times of deployment. Research indicates that support for a military wife who remains at home during a deployment acts as a buffer against the negative effects associated with stress brought on by deployments (Rosen & Moghadam, 1990; Bowen, Mancini, Martin, Ware, & Nelson, 2003). Indeed, it can be concluded that support during deployments is vital to both the mental and physical wellbeing of military spouses. This research has failed to address the experiences of husbands who remain at home. It is therefore unclear whether this growing group of spouses would benefit from the same support programs that have been developed for military wives.

The military has embraced families as a crucial part of the overall military mission. When one's family is well cared for, the active duty member is better able to focus on the task at hand (Drake, 2004; McFayden et al., 2005; Pittman et al., 2004). Additionally, when spouses are supported during times of separation due to deployments,

they are more likely to support the retention intentions of the active duty member (Orthner & Bowen, 1982; Rosen et al, 1989; Schwartz & Wood, 1991). Recognizing the importance of family, the military has provided support for the spouse who remains at home for many years. However, many of these programs appear to focus on a military wife and dependent children. Because so little is known about the experience of deployment from a husband's perspective, the goal of this study was to describe deployments as lived by the husbands who remain at home during a deployment. This information can then be used to understand husbands' experiences, determine if husbands require support during deployments, and assess whether or not traditional support programs meet the needs of this growing population of spouses.

Qualitative methodology was employed due to the subjective nature of the topic. Specifically, the phenomenological approach was chosen due to its inherent ability to allow for lived meanings to emerge from the data that was gathered (Giorgi, 2008). In addition to providing understanding of the experiences a husband has being the one who remains at home during a deployment, this approach is also used as an aid to provide a basis of understanding of spousal experiences when developing new policies or procedures.

With cooperation from a Midwestern Air Force Base, volunteers were solicited through the local Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC). Five participants were identified as meeting the inclusion criterion. Two participants responded to an e-mail invitation to participate and three additional participants were obtained through snowball

sampling techniques. Six research questions were developed with the intent of understanding the lived experiences of the participants.

Findings revealed that husbands do require support during times of deployment; however none of the husbands believed that current support systems were meant for men, nor were the activities available appealing to the men. As a result, these husbands found ways to support themselves, including monitoring their own activities, utilizing technology to communicate with the deployed spouse, and seeking the companionship of friends and family. Discrepant findings focused more on unique challenges faced by individual participants instead of a difference in what support was received and how the support was received.

#### Interpretation

Because so little is known about this particular group of military spouses, the purpose of this study was to understand deployments from the perspective of the husbands who remained at home. It was found that the husbands who participated in this study experienced similar challenges during the deployments, as did wives in previous studies. However, unlike wives who have been studied, the husbands in this study did not find support to be readily available. When discussing the interpretation of the findings of this study, consideration should be given to the following: (a) whether the deployed spouse has returned home or not, (b) if the husband is active duty military or civilian, (c) if the deployed spouse is an officer or enlisted, and (d) whether there are children involved.

The six general interview questions asked of each participant were developed using Lazarus' theory of stress as a guide. The first question asked participants to simply talk about their personal experience during their spouse's deployment. As a result of this open dialogue, several similarities emerged that were ultimately used to create a thematic index. First, the husbands in this study described the experience as lonely; each husband missed his spouse and expressed concern over her safety in the deployed location. Second, the group outlined the addition of responsibilities as a challenge to be faced during the deployment. Finally, husbands unanimously agreed on the perception that current support programs were not meant for men. The general consensus was that these support programs held no interest for the husbands in the study. Using their answers as a guide, a thematic index was created with a focus on three topics: the actual experience of the deployment as lived by the husbands who remained at home, what types of support were received, and how those supports were received.

For questions three through five, the husbands in this study overwhelmingly discussed support. Each of the five husbands indicated that he was able to communicate with his deployed wife via e-mail and telephone on a regular basis. With only a few exceptions, the group was able to engage in some form of communication on a daily basis. This was listed as a major contributor to the group's ability to cope with the physical separation. Additionally, each husband was quick to explain that staying away from media exposure was key to the ability to function on a day-to-day basis. The ability to socialize with friends and family was also highly important to the group.

Out of the five participants, only one husband ever participated in any type of formalized support program; however all five husbands were very quick to voice the opinion that any type of support program was not meant for men. Whether formalized support programs exclude men was not addressed, but it should be noted that each husband in this study held the same opinion: these groups are designed for women only. Upon explication of the data, findings revealed that the husbands in this study unanimously indicated that they sought their own methods of support. The main types of support involved monitoring one's own activities and media exposure, traveling to visit family and friends, and communicating frequently with the deployed spouse.

The final question asked each husband in the study what advice he would give to a new Air Force husband about to experience a spouse's deployment for the first time. Their answers offered information about what these men believed was important during a deployment. Suggestions tended to focus on staying busy with routine activities, seeking out companionship from one's family and one's peers, and monitoring one's own mental and physical health. Keeping a routine not only helped time appear to go faster, it also provided a way to cope with the loneliness of being separated from one's spouse. The group indicated that, because they did not feel formal support programs included them, they were left to seek out their own support systems.

It should be noted that this study reflects the experiences of Air Force husbands from one military base in the Midwest. The criterion for inclusion in this study was that a husband had a currently deployed wife or a wife who recently returned from a deployment. Two of the husbands in this study had wives that were deployed at the time

of the interview and three of the husbands relied on memory to provide answers to the interview questions. It was an assumption of this study that the three husbands remembered and reported the experience accurately.

This study made no distinction between husbands who were civilians only or who were also on active duty status. Two husbands were civilians only and two husbands were prior on active duty; one was a retired officer and one chose to separate from the Air Force when his enlistment came up. One participant was on active duty status at the time of the interview. Even with this diversity, findings from this study revealed many similarities; however, findings may not reflect the experiences of all husbands who remain at home during a deployment.

Additionally, no distinction was made between husbands of women who were officers or who were on enlisted active duty. Within this study, three of the husbands were married to officers and two were married to enlisted women. It is possible that this influenced a desire to participate, as well as how the questions were answered. If conducted on a larger scale, the findings may differ based on typical age and educational differences between the two groups of active duty personnel and their spouses.

Finally, whether a husband had children at home was not considered in the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Two of the husbands had a small child at home and while their answers seemed to be fairly similar, their lived experiences may not be indicative of the general population of husbands who remain at home during a deployment.

### Theoretical Considerations

Lazarus's theory of stress classifies stress as a demand that results in a relationship between person and stressor (Ryan-Wenger, 2001). In the experience of this group of husbands, the relationship was quite personal in nature. As this relationship between husband and stressor developed, the husbands went through a period of cognitive appraisal in which the coping mechanisms available are weighed against the stress brought on by the deployment. Each participant described this cognitive appraisal process in a similar fashion.

Each of the husbands indicated that their wife's deployment was something that simply had to be dealt with. There was no other option. Participant E phrased it, "You just do what you gotta do because that's just what you both are into." Participant A, an active duty military member himself, indicated that, even though the circumstances were slightly different, he and his wife had already coped with separation in the past and would no doubt cope with it again sometime in the future. Participant C described learning of his wife's deployment in casual terms, "She signed up for it and I was okay with it. I wasn't surprised. I knew something like that was logical."

None of the husbands in this study believed that current support programs fit his needs or would help him find ways to cope with separation. These husbands were then faced with finding ways to support themselves during this time of separation from their spouse. According to Lazarus, coping can be done on a primary or a secondary level: the primary level evaluates the threat of the stressor, and the secondary level evaluates the resources available (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998). When evaluating the stress, the husbands



appeared to be relatively self-aware. Each indicated that he knew what his particular tendencies were and actively worked to avoid any situation that would harm his physical and mental well being.

Of the three types of stress Lazarus identifies, harm, threat, and challenge, the men in this study appear to identify the entire deployment related experience as a challenge (Lazarus, 1993). In the absence of formalized support systems, the participants looked inward and provided their own support systems. Lazarus (1993) further clarified stress and coping by identifying two main coping strategies: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves removing the actual stressor, whereas emotion-focused coping involves approaching the stressor in a non-threatening way. Because deployments are a part of life in the military, they are imminently hard to avoid. With this in mind, the husbands in this study exhibited emotion-focused coping through the use of self support systems such as routines and avoiding the media.

#### Implications for Social Change

The year 2009 was officially declared the Year of the Military Family by a unanimous decision of Congress on June 2, 2009 (Levin & McCain, 2009). The government publicly recognized the sacrifices made on a daily basis by more than 2.9 million family members of active duty and reserve service members' families. Additionally, the government acknowledged the strain put on military family members by multiple and lengthy deployments. Senate Resolution 165 illustrates a commitment by the US government to help ensure that military families remain resilient and ensure the physical and mental health needs are met.

Recognition does not necessarily mean that tangible support is available. This significance of this study is that findings provide a vital piece of information: understanding deployments from the lived perspective of the husbands who remain at home. This understanding can then be used to help ensure that the needs of all spouses who remain at home during a deployment are being for addressed. By understanding this growing population of military spouses, we can take the next step to develop programs that help ensure the needs of all of our military family members are being met and cared for.

The husbands in this study have demonstrated they experience the same types of challenges and stressors that wives who remain at home during a deployment experience. They described the experience of staying home as lonely and indicated that safety of their deployed spouse was a constant concern. The participants also explained that it was easy to become isolated during this time of separation if they did not actively seek out the companionship of others. The main difference between husbands and wives seemed to be based on the perception that formal support programs were geared specifically towards wives. Wives who remain at home during a deployment have the option of engaging in formalized support activities, while the husbands who remain at home during a deployment believed these supports were not designed for them.

The Air Force, and the other branches of the military can work to address this perception by redefining the types of supports that are planned specifically for spouses of deployed personnel. Understanding how husbands experience a deployment can help provide information for those who plan and implement formalized support activities. The

five participants in this study each indicated a desire for the military to provide support for husbands. Participant A simply stated, “You kind of need to make sure that you capture all facets of those of us who are here at home.” Participant B echoed this sentiment with the statement, “I still think there should be something more geared toward men.” Participant C succinctly indicated this was something that we need to work on. Participant D spoke in terms of specifics and said outright that support was an area that the Air Force needed to improve on, “It needs to be formal and regulated and reach out to everyone and not just some.” As the only husband who attended any type of formalized support, Participant E spoke from experience with great emotion:

“Guys are not going to hang out with a bunch of mommies and I totally understand why, God I know why! I mean being around all the mommies talking about how their husbands are useless and nobody helps around the house and stuff like that, you know I totally understand. No man would ever want to deal with that or talk about women’s issues.”

By understanding the experiences and desires of the husbands in this study, programs can be established that will help ensure that all spouses are represented in programs designed to fulfill a commitment to support military families.

### Recommendations

Military services that focus on support and welfare for family members, the Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC), religious organizations, and counselors associated with the Military and Family Life Consultant Program (MFLCP) should consider the findings of this study. The husbands in this study experienced similar stressors by remaining at home during a deployment as wives in previous studies. By understanding the experience of this group of military spouses, support programs can be

implemented that reach out to all military spouses and not just a particular population of spouses. Findings indicate that men do not attend current programs designed for spouses of deployed personnel, they do not feel welcome at these activities, nor do they feel that current programs meet their needs. Planning events that appeal to the husbands who remain at home or focusing on gender-neutral events geared towards families might be ways to involve husbands.

Focusing on finding out what interests men in future studies may help encourage husbands who remain at home during deployments to participate in formalized support programs. This study provided information that will serve as a foundation for future studies. Understanding deployments from the perspective of the husbands who remain at home is only the first step. Future studies should be expanded to determine what types of support this group of spouses are interested in as well as programs that would meet the needs of this growing group of military spouses.

The scope of this study limited participation to husbands of active duty females in the Air Force. Expanding the examination to participants in all branches of the military would provide a more complete look at the experiences husbands have during deployments. Additionally, future studies should be conducted to see if there is a difference between husbands who are civilians and those who are active duty, whether there are differences between husbands of officers and husbands of enlisted personnel, and husbands who have small children to take care of and those husbands with grown children or no children at all. Given that the majority of the husbands in this study were

relying on their memory of the deployment, it might be beneficial for future studies to focus only on husbands with a spouse who is currently deployed.

### Researcher's Reflections

Even though the researcher consistently engaged in bracketing presuppositions, it is possible that some bias does exist. Consistent with phenomenological methodology, this researcher was not separate from the phenomenon being studied. Possible sources of bias include personal experience, previous research as well as the research methodology. The entire topic of military deployments is one that the researcher is familiar with on a personal as well as professional level. As a military spouse herself, the researcher has been the one who remains at home multiple times. Additionally, the researcher has studied military deployments from a variety of perspectives for several years. As previously mentioned, the majority of research on military spouses used wives as the participant pool. The researcher has identified with any number of research findings.

The phenomenological methodology was chosen in part for the benefit of not being separate from the phenomenon being studied. As a result of personal experience and previous research, the researcher expected that husbands of active duty females would likely experience the same types of situations and emotions as wives of active duty males. Despite all attempts to bracket presuppositions, it is possible that some bias did in fact exist. Care was taken to formulate interview questions free from personal bias on the part of the researcher. Even though the initial interview questions were comprised using Lazarus' theory of stress as a foundation, it was the researcher who personally asked the participants about their experience. Additionally, prior to the actual interview, the

researcher spent a few minutes with each participant developing a rapport. According to phenomenological methodology, this was meant to ensure that participants felt comfortable enough to share their experiences. The researcher made a conscious effort during each interview to bracket presuppositions yet not hide her familiarity with remaining at home during deployments. It is possible that this sense of shared experiences influenced the information that participants shared. As a result, future studies should include researchers with no personal relationship with the research proposal.

Finally, one of the assumptions of this study was that husbands would require and benefit from receiving support during deployments. Results from this study indicate that husbands experienced similar emotions during deployments that wives have in previous studies. As this researcher is aware, deployments can be a lonely time for the spouse who remains at home, however she did not realize just how easy it is for husbands to simply remain alone. The results of this study strengthened the resolve of the researcher to continue in this particular area of study; if not as primary researcher, then as an advocate for the support of all military spouses during deployments.

### Conclusions

It is well established in the literature that the military lifestyle is full of challenging situations that are exacerbated by frequent and prolonged deployments. Literature has revealed that support during deployments becomes a buffer for stress, an aid in coping with geographical separation from one's spouse, and reduces negative emotions associated with deployments. Military spouses are an important part of the

military mission. Research has shown that a spouse is the main reason an active duty service member chooses to remain in the military. As military families are brought into the spotlight and providing support for the mental and physical wellbeing of spouses becomes the focus for the government, understanding both husbands and wives of deployed active duty personnel is critical.

The findings of this study help portray a more complete picture of how military spouses experience a deployment. Despite the changing demographics, many people automatically associate gender with the term military spouse; initial thoughts gravitate to wife. The vast majority of research involving military spouses utilizes females as participants. Little was known about how husbands experienced deployments, and whether husbands require support when their wife is deployed? The purpose of this study was to understand deployments from a husband's perspective. The findings of this study are consistent with previous literature: husbands reported that they experience many of the same challenges wives do during a deployment. A military deployment is a lonely time and these husbands missed the physical and emotional presence of their wives. Unless they remained diligent, the husbands in this study found it easy to become isolated. Husbands in this study indicated that the assumption of sole responsibility for the day-to-day running of a household was one of the most stressful events of the deployment.

Another major stressor husbands discussed was concern over the safety of their wives. The group was adamant in their decision to avoid media exposure of the GWOT and deployment locations. One participant summed it up by explaining that the media is

not your best friend. Another participant claimed that dwelling on the media reports made the nights long. Each husband was quite clear: he did not want external reminders of his wife's deployment and the inherent danger she faced.

The findings of this study appear to be consistent with the literature. Husbands would benefit from support during deployments; however, the husbands in this study were specific in their belief that current formalized programs were not intended for them. They did not have any desire to attend current programs due in part to the belief that the activities were geared toward women only and did not fit their needs. Finding ways to provide support to husbands who remain at home during a deployment will benefit the men, as well as their wives, families, and the military in general.



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APPENDIX A:  
INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to take part in an independent research study of the experiences of Air Force husbands during a military deployment. This study is not endorsed or sponsored by the US Air Force and the questions or view points of the researcher do may not represent those of the US Air Force.

You were chosen for the study because your wife is either deployed or recently returned from a deployment. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Jenny Pedersen, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. Jenny has been an Air Force wife for the last ten years and is passionate about helping military spouses cope with the ever-increasing frequency of deployment separation.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how deployments affect husbands of active duty Air Force women who remain at home during a deployment in terms of the support these men seek out. The experiences you share will be used to describe the experience of remaining at home during a deployment from the lives of those who live it and determine if current support systems are adequate to support both the husbands as well as the wives who remain at home.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Meet with the researcher one on one for a semi-structured interview where you will be free to discuss any aspects of a military deployment you would like to.
- Review a summary of the transcript of the interview to ensure that the researcher captured your experience.
- Write an anonymous, informal essay describing what it is like to remain at home when your wife is deployed.
- Review a summary of all of the data received to ensure that the researcher adequately describes the experience of being the one who remains at home.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to participate in the study. No one at Walden University, or the Air Force will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If



you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

It is possible that by answering interview questions, you may feel some discomfort. You are free to skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. However, if the discomfort continues, feel free to contact the Military Family Life Consultants (MFLAC) at 660-687-1052. The MFLAC employs master's and Ph.D. level counselors who provide counseling services free of charge to military dependents. Any contact you wish to make with MFLAC will be kept confidential and no official records will be kept.

There are no individual benefits of participating in this study; however, your experiences will be used to create a more complete look at military spouses in general. This information can then be used to modify existing support programs and or create entirely new programs aimed at reaching as many spouses of deployed active duty service personnel as possible.

### **Confidentiality:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

### **Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at 660-238-5820 or through email at [jenny.pedersen@waldenu.edu](mailto:jenny.pedersen@waldenu.edu) If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **10-15-09-0324273** and it expires on **October 14, 2010**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

### **Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

---

Date of Consent

---

Participant's Signature

---

Researcher's Signature

---

### CONSENT TO AUDIO RECORD

I understand that this study involves the audio recording of my interview with the researcher, Jenny Pedersen. The recording will be used to ensure accuracy on the part of the researcher during the data analysis phase of this study. Neither my name nor any identifying information will be associated with the recording or the subsequent transcription. Additionally, only the researcher will be permitted to listen to the recordings.

I understand that the recording will be transcribed by the researcher and will be erased once the transcription has been checked for accuracy at my request. Transcripts of my interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in the researcher's dissertation. No identifying information will be attached to any part of the interview or transcription that is used in the dissertation.

I further understand that immediately following review of the summary of the transcription, the recording can be erased at my request.

Please check one of the following options from each group, A and B:

A ☐ I consent to have my interview recorded and transcribed.

☐ I do not consent to have my interview recorded and transcribed.

B ☐ I consent to the use my transcript in the researcher's dissertation providing that no identifying information is associated with the use of the material.

☐ I do not consent to the use of my transcript in the researcher's dissertation.

The above permission is in effect for 365 days from the date this form is signed. I understand that if I give consent to audio record, all audio recordings will be destroyed after verification of the transcript for accuracy by me. All transcripts will be stored in a confidential and locked location at the researcher's home for a period of five years after the dissertation has been approved by Walden University. After this time, all information will be destroyed.

Printed Name of Participant

---

Date of Consent

---

Participant's Signature

---

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## APPENDIX B

## INITIAL CONTACT E-MAIL

Dear fellow military spouse,

Hello! My name is Jenny Pedersen and I'd like the chance to introduce myself and offer you the opportunity to participate in an independent research study.

I am a doctoral student at Walden University. To complete the requirements for a Ph.D. in Psychology, I am conducting a study to explore the experiences of military spouses during a deployment. I have been married to an active duty service member for the last ten years and have experienced my fair share of deployments. You have been contacted because your wife is either currently deployed or has just recently returned from a deployment within the last six months.

As you may well be aware, the term military spouse is used to refer to a very broad population. However, the vast majority of research involving military spouses targets the experiences of wives with husbands who are deployed. I am interested in understanding the experience of being the one who remains at home from the husband's point of view. Results from this study will contribute to a growing body of literature used to understand the challenges faced at home when an active duty service member is deployed. Information provided by this study can then be used to ensure that support programs appeal to a wide variety of military spouses.

What is involved in this research study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete a 45-60 minute interview with the researcher at a public place of your choosing
- Provide consent to use the transcribed data in the written dissertation
- Write an anonymous, informal essay discussing any aspect of being the one who remains at home during a deployment
- Evaluate a summary of the transcribed interview for accuracy
- Evaluate a summary of the all of the data once it has been analyzed

Arrangements will be made for a face-to-face interview with me to be held in a mutually convenient, public location. During this interview we will discuss the experiences you had during the time your wife was deployed. There are no right or wrong answers, nor is there a specific hypothesis being tested. Rather, this study is aimed at understanding deployments and support from a husband's perspective. With this in mind, you will also be asked to write a completely anonymous, informal essay in which you discuss any aspect of your wife's deployment and your subsequent experiences that you wish.

After the interview, I will e-mail you a written summary of the transcripts and ask that you review it for accuracy. If you feel I have missed anything or have misunderstood any aspect of our discussion I will go back and make the appropriate changes. Additionally, after all of the interviews have been completed and I have had the opportunity to analyze all of the data I collect, I will email you another summary detailing the results. Once again, I will ask you to verify the summary for accuracy.

Your privacy is of utmost concern to me. I want to reassure you up front that all information gathered from this study will remain confidential. I will be the only one with access to identifying information linking you with your specific data. None of the information you provide will be linked back to you in any way.

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated and extremely valuable. By participating you are helping to fill a gap in the current literature involving military spouses. Your experiences will provide a more complete understanding of the experiences of military spouses experiencing a deployment as the one who remains at home.

I would like to ask you to consider participating in this independent study. If I can answer any questions or address any concerns you have to help in the decision making process, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience. If you would like to participate please respond to this e-mail or call me at the contact number listed below.

Thank you for your careful consideration of participation and I look forward to speaking with you soon!

Jenny Pedersen

## SECOND E-MAIL SENT TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT LIST

Dear Fellow Military Spouse,

Hello again! As you may recall, you received an e-mail from me about a week ago asking you to consider participating in an independent research study involving military spouses. I am including a general outline of the study and what would be required of you should you choose to participate. If I do not hear from you in response to this e-mail I will assume that you do not wish to participate and no further contact will be initiated by me. Thank you once again for your consideration. Please feel free to read through the following information designed to help you make an informed decision.

Military spouse is a general term used to refer to any person married to an active duty service member. The experiences of being a military spouse are unique and often quite stressful, particularly during times of deployment. Previous research on military spouses has only addressed the experiences of wives of active duty service members and has ignored husbands. A review of the literature indicates that support during deployments is vital to the mental and physical health of the spouses who remain at home and further enables the military to complete its mission. However, there remains an important gap in the current literature regarding military spouses who are male. Because this growing population of spouses is underrepresented in the literature, it is unclear if husbands experience the same need for support as their counterparts who are wives do.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of a group of husbands who remain at home during a deployment with regard to their need for support. Findings from this research will provide a broader picture of the experiences of military spouses during deployments. This would be an important contribution to the existing literature and would enable support programs to reach both men and women who are married to those serving on active duty.

This study is designed to explore the experiences of husbands who remain at home during a deployment. There are no immediate, personal benefits to participation, however, by agreeing to participate in the study, you will be helping to provide a more complete picture of the experiences of a military spouse. There is minimal risk of harm associated with participation and is limited to feelings of discomfort by discussing details of your wife's deployment. You are free to skip any question you feel uncomfortable answering and you can discontinue the interview at any point without fear of repercussion. If at any time you do experience feelings of discomfort, please contact the Military and Family Life Consultant Program through the Airman and Family Readiness Center. The MFLCP is a short term counseling service provided free of charge to military dependents and no records are kept. The MFLCP employs Masters and Ph.D. level licensed clinical counselors and can be contacted 24 hours a day at 660-687-1052.

Your privacy is of utmost importance to me and confidentiality will be protected in a number of ways. All audio recordings, transcripts, and documents pertaining to the study will be stored in a locked cabinet at my home. I will be the only one with access to any identifying information. Additionally, I will be the only person with access to the transcripts and no identifying information will be provided to anyone other than myself.

If you agree to participate you will be asked to participate in the following:

Initial interview (45-60 minutes)

Write an anonymous, informal essay (15-20 minutes)

Review transcript summary within 5 days of the interview (10-15 minutes)

Review summary of entire data analysis within 1 month of the interviews (10-15 minutes)

Please feel free to contact me at any time during this process with any comments, questions, or concerns you may have. I can be reached at 660-238-5820 or via email at [jenny.pedersen@waldenu.edu](mailto:jenny.pedersen@waldenu.edu)

Jenny Pedersen, MS  
candidate for Ph.D., Walden University



## E-MAIL TO ACCOMPANY SUMMARY OF TRANSCRIPT

Dear (Participant),

Thank you once again for your willingness to meet and discuss your deployment related experiences. I appreciate your time and the effort you have put forth thus far in helping me obtain information for my dissertation research.

Please take a few moments and review the attached summary of your interview transcription. I want to ensure that I have captured your experiences accurately and have not misunderstood anything we discussed during the interview.

If you agree with the summary there is no further need for you to do anything. I will take your silence as confirmation that the summary is an accurate portrayal of your experiences as described by you. If, however, you disagree with anything in the summary, please email me with your concerns and I will make the appropriate changes. After the changes have been made, I will send you the updated summary for your review and we will repeat the process as many times as it takes for me to get it right.

Thank you once again for your participation and your help in assuring that the data I gather is as accurate as possible.

Jenny Pedersen

## APPENDIX C

## GENERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please tell me as much as you are comfortable sharing about your experiences while your wife was deployed.
2. Can you tell me about any challenges you might have experienced during this time?
3. What were the primary ways in which you dealt with the challenges you just described?
4. Did you attend any formalized support programs? These would be events that had a scheduled start and stop time as well as structured activity of some sort.
5. Why or why not?
6. What advice would you give to a new air force husband whose wife is about to deploy for the first time?

## FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

1. You mention that you have been deployed a couple of times and this is her first deployment, does the fact that she's deployed have any effect on you? I don't know where she's at; I know some locations are a little more hostile than others. I know my husband's done time in a desert that comes with a beach and some snorkeling was involved whereas the worry factor there in terms of safety is not as much as where there is simply just a desert.
2. I don't know if you're aware or not, but the AF often times provides avenues of social support and I know you got my initial contact email through the A&FRC have you gone to any of the official, formalized functions that they offer at all?
3. And you said you've only been married for two years? So the whole military is probably new to you then?
4. My husband's been deployed to some locations that are maybe a little more hostile than others by their very nature and the concern factor I think is determined by the location. Have you found that to be any kind of issue? Do you worry about the fact that she's over there and you are here?
5. Is there's anything you feel like would have been beneficial to know before she left, or is there anything that maybe you wished you would have had but didn't?
6. Well, I know you said you didn't really experience any challenges during your wife's deployment, but can you think of any ways in which you dealt with even minor challenges you might have faced? And if not a challenge, anything that might have been stressful?
7. Is there anything that would have helped you out during this deployment process, from start to finish that was not available or that you wished might have been available. Something that would have been helpful to you or something that you can imagine might be helpful to a new Air Force spouse in this situation.
8. Do you think maybe that personality might have something to do with that too? It might be different for a spouse who is perhaps a little more outgoing than another.
9. Right, that makes sense so were there any other either individual people or groups or maybe even just family or friends that you relied on when your wife was deployed?
10. I know you mentioned a couple of different times that the nature of the job is going to influence a bit in terms of the worry factor and perhaps the stress over the safety of your wife. Did you find yourself in that position where you were really worried about the fact that she was there and you were not?
11. Was there anything in particular that you did whenever, well I know you said you thought about it all the time but if it ever got particularly bad was there anything that maybe helped you cope with it?
12. Is anything else that we didn't cover that you can think of that might help paint that picture I'm hoping to produce of what it's like to be the one who stays at home.

### INSTRUCTIONAL LETTER FOR ANONYMOUS ESSAYS

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research! I appreciate the time you took to meet with me during the interview process. I would like to ask you to write an informal essay that will remain completely anonymous to supplement the information I am obtaining from interviews such as the one just completed. The purpose of these essays is to complement the information obtained through interviews.

Please take a few moments to write down any thoughts or feelings that you have regarding being the one who remains at home while your wife deploys. Do not concern yourself with spelling or grammar and feel free to write anything that comes to mind. This information can be a repeat of what was discussed during the interview, or any new information you believe might benefit a person wishing to know more about the experiences of men with deployed wives.

Do not put your name or any other identifying information on this essay. Please return it to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided. This essay will be 100% anonymous and confidential and no one will ever be able to link you with the words you write.

Thank you once again for your participation.

Jenny Pedersen

## APPENDIX D

## NEWSPAPER AD

Independent researcher looking for men with deployed or recently deployed wives to participate in a study involving support for spouses during deployments. Interested volunteers should contact xxx-xxx-xxxx for more information.

## APPENDIX E

## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

## PARTICIPANT A

Researcher (R)

Participant (P)

(R) Please share with me as much as you are willing to share about being the one who stays at home during a deployment.

(P) OK so basically the situation is I have a daughter with my current wife and also 2 stepchildren so you know the situation was compounded when the issue of custody came up and whose going to take care of the kids while my wife is gone so we'd initially planned for me to take care of all the kids while she was gone. Unfortunately um the week that she left after she got in country her ex-husband showed up in town and took me to court so actually I only have my daughter now so that's—as far as home life that's where it's at. Um I don't know I guess there's a lot to say and I don't know where to start. My interpretation of how the situation is from my standpoint as opposed to hers is with my wife—and you may assume that with most relationships the wife usually does the bills and those things and although you anticipate the added pressure of the extra duties and those things you don't fully comprehend until you are put in the situation and um that was probably the most difficult—was the pressure of understanding what our finances entail all by myself which we tried to slowly transition that before she left. I took it over for a month and kind of shared responsibility and then the month before she left I took over all the responsibility but it was I'm still here in case something falls apart so I mean that was difficult but um definitely the day to day activities are just still more complex you know with her gone. It's difficult because you don't realize the little things that get done by somebody else until they are gone and you realize hey that didn't get done and it's on me so um and as your research indicated most often it's the husband who is gone and that's what we were used to because I'd been gone twice since we'd been married so um I have a new found appreciation for what she's done while I was gone so um I don't know. One of the questions you sent me was did you use any formalized support prior to and we didn't actually. I think the only thing I can attribute to that would be a stress management class but that wasn't associated with the deployment it was just something culturally the military tries to do to help with just the understanding that they know that at some point my family is going to be under stress so um other than that just mentally preparing yourself.

(R) That can be the tricky part.

(P) I know! I mean you know talking with each other and keeping a positive attitude I think is more important than just about anything that can be done whether it's from my

end you know when we were going through that situation where she just got into an extremely stressful situation and to look back and think that I'm going to court and fighting her ex-husband for her kids I mean that was, I mean not to shield her from the stress but to keep a positive attitude and trying to reassure her that no matter the outcome, no matter how horrible it was that you know we'll get through it so. She's only been gone a month so it's still in the settling period where I'm getting into a routine with my daughter, she's only two.

(R) What a sweet age.

(P) (laughs) She kind of drives the house right now.

(R) I don't know that it gets any better honestly. Mine are 13, 11, and 10 and they still drive the house.

(P) (laughs) my step children are 11 and 7 so they actually helped a lot while they were here. They took care of their chores which took care of a piece of that responsibility and then they were kind of self-sufficient so that helped whereas my daughter she is completely dependent on me to do everything for her. Um just keeping a routine also helps you know doing the same things over and over helps the time go by fast and um counting days is definitely something you don't want to get into that's the worst thing possible but we all fall into at some point in time whether it's halfway through and then you get to the halfway point and I only have so long left um but ya, a routine has definitely helped me both being in the situation of a deployment and then being the one left behind it's help me cope but also establishing that routine before because there's a big enough change when she leaves let alone to change your routine.

(R) I've found that to be true as well.

(P) So just keeping with that has helped me and it probably has helped Madison my daughter as well with the adjustment of her mom and her siblings being gone but still going through the same steps everyday you know probably helped her cope and she can't tell me that but you can see the way she interacts um. Gosh what else is there? I mean I guess my perception is a little different simply because it's not my first deployment. It's HER first deployment and her first time away from me like this so there's that little bit of difference but we've already coped with the separation and that anxiety and again I can just probably say that communication is the key to keeping that and you know alive and well and going so.

(R) Now the next question specifically asks for any challenges you might experience during the deployment and I know you mentioned establishing a routine and taking on those additional duties that maybe we don't maybe think about so much until all of a sudden we are staring at them in the face and left with I have to do this and this and this. Can you think of any other challenges you might be facing?

(P) Um, yeah I tried to put some thought into this last night but it's probably one dimensional yeah I suppose simply because being...keeping that mental health aspect um specially with single parents you've got to have that me time whether it's a little bit and I'm not saying a lot but you have to have some and in a four month time frame if you don't have any that kind of drives down spirits and things so that becomes more difficult when you're the single parent simply because you know you have to try to find a babysitter if you want to have me time so I think that was an additional challenge. Luckily I have a lot of really good close friends that have children my daughter's age so that helped um but you know again it's you know you can't just pack up and go do whatever you had planned or what you would prior to have routinely done. I don't know. I think that's probably the thing that stands out the most to me is, let me chose my words wisely you don't feel tied down but you're a little bit more restricted in your own personal life. I don't want to say in aspirations, but do you know?

(R) Yes, that totally makes sense. With that in particular, you have a lot of really good close friends, is that the primary way you've dealt with the challenges you've faced?

(P) Yes, a good support system is definitely a key. Whether it's family friends um you know I think that just that goes along with military life. You are typically very close to those you work with simply because that's just the culture you know. you usually find that in just about every situation that you— you know it's funny because there is that oh what is that organization, I think it's the military spouse club?

(R) Oh yeah, the enlisted spouse club and the officer spouse club.

(P) But they are typically chaired by women.

(R) Yes.

(P) So you know I don't necessarily fit into that and I have not looked into that but they do have those additional support systems out there and I know they do deployed spouse luncheons and dinners and they also have I can't think of the name, it escapes me they uh, provide day care? It might be called Give Parents a Break?

(R) Yes, the one that's through the home day care providers?

(P) Ya. So that's out there so maybe sometimes if you're new to the base and you haven't already established a friendship... I guess I have to ask too is this specific to military to military?

(R) No, just specific to husbands.



(P) So then that gets more broad simply because I have the benefit of already being associated with the military and already very involved in having that so that every time we go somewhere new I'm pushed into finding friends and those things so whereas a lot of times, especially if you're a male you're a spouse but you're a civilian spouse but you may be a stay at home dad so you don't get the opportunities that someone with a career does because whether you want to or not you become friends with someone. Um so yeah I think that establishing a support system for yourself is just as important as establishing that for your spouse that deploys.

(R) So you've never attended any of these official spouses functions you mentioned?

(P) I didn't. I didn't simply because the connotation is always just the wife and you know you don't usually see any others and I don't think its necessarily limited to that I just think it's the notion that everyone goes with.

(R) I think they are trying to change that. In the sense that my husband's been in for 11 years and when I first came in it was the wives club whereas now it's termed spouses club

(P) (said spouses club at same time)

(R) Although I've not personally noticed a lot of new members rushing to join.

(P) I don't know if you've seen or watched the show Army Wives? It's I don't know the name, but the psychologist, the male, yeah, it's Roland, he goes to those meetings so I suppose the culture's there it's just not utilized as it should be I suppose. And too I suppose that does lean toward the side of the non-military spouse. You know it lends to that simply because that group tries to get a someone who is not associated with the military directly, I mean indirectly through their spouse they try and get them to understand that culture and that support of Ok you know you may not deploy so you may not fully understand what they are going through and they try to develop that. So being a military member I think that's probably why you don't see a lot of you know military members associate with an organization.

(R) That's an interesting perspective but it makes sense though.

(P) Yeah, that's the way I perceive it I suppose.

(R) That makes sense. So if you had to give any advice at all to a new AF husband who is experiencing deployment for the first time as the one who stays at home what would that be?

(P) Other than keep an open mind? (laughs) um no... I just...in the military it kind of imposes this mindset on you as being prepared and that's you know they usually do this

towards the deploying member but I think that should flow over to the spouse that's left behind and that's be prepared physically, mentally, and spiritually, it's the whole person concept. And making sure that that's kind of squared away. I know when life gets hectic and busy that's hard to do or nail down specifically but just doing it the best that you can, preparing and um I don't know it's easy I don't know being the person that's deployed it's easy to I don't know I almost think that for me in particular that was the easier of the two situations simply because you know you're in a new environment anyway so you're trying to just adapt to that whereas my current situation I was used to this environment so I didn't expect such a disruption as much as I've gotten and its not bad in any sense it's just um we're usually very neat and organized and orderly and that kind of changed and you don't necessarily suspect that to happen because you're not the one leaving. You think everything's going to go on and shouldn't change a whole lot but it really does because that other person kind of drives you know how things happen and help make those decisions and it's all put on you so I think that what my wife and I did before she left helped was while she was still there we tried to take a phased approach you know she kind of started stepping back on the responsibilities and just slowly getting me prepared as opposed to just one day gone and "see ya'! It's all yours." By all means the military does provide a lot of stuff to help you prepare you know family support center and those things but I think the most that you can do for yourself is just try to ease your way into it...what else...it's hard because I'm trying to make sure I'm specific to my situation now as opposed to the mindset of being the one that's gone. It's been fairly easy I've not had too much of a rough time other than the week that she left that was probably the worst week but I think that helped because that was such a stressful time and then things kind of let up after that and it always puts things in perspective when things are really bad and then you know??

(R) Yes, that's very true!

(P) It's like Oh, wow.

(R) Yeah, you can appreciate the rest of the day to day

(P) Yeah, things aren't so bad anymore even when they are. Coping with the added responsibilities and just the loneliness of being...especially me I love my daughter to death but I miss those adult conversations at home you know and stuff at times just um gosh I keep going back to that routine, that helps. And if you're not a stay at home parent that's added. You kind of get a break during the day. I couldn't imagine what a stay at home parent would have to go through at this time because they don't get that um I don't really want to say relief so to speak, you always want to be around your children, but you have to have that interaction with someone you're age. I hope I'm being of some help to you because things haven't been too terribly difficult.

(R) Absolutely, you have. There's no right or wrong or something in particular I'm looking for.

(P) Well I guess since things haven't been that difficult for me you at least get that perspective that it's not all tragedy when the mom leaves and the dad's just "aaaahhhh!!" I think we'd already had a relationship where there was already a lot of shared responsibilities. So that helped. The chores were always done at the same time I mean we always done that I think it helped me more than anything simply because that wasn't just a huge undertaking all at once. Now laundry, that was another thing, she doesn't trust me with laundry, I've bleached a couple things (laughs)

(R) (laughs) but at least it's not her stuff getting bleached now.

(P) (laughs) but I think that's probably what I would attribute the most stress to is the little things that you don't, I guess you would say the little things that you would take for granted um and I don't think that necessarily the deployment causes, I think it's just the separation the realization that this is truly what it would be like to be on your own so to speak.

(R) If you don't mind I have one additional question that is not on the list I emailed you

(P) No not at all!

(R) You mention that you have been deployed a couple of times and this is her first deployment, does the fact that she's deployed have any effect on you? I don't know where she's at; I know some locations are a little more hostile than others. I know my husband's done time in a desert that comes with a beach and some snorkeling was involved whereas the worry factor there in terms of safety is not as much as where there is simply just a desert.

(P) Absolutely!

(R) Do you find that to be any type of an issue with you?

(P) It's funny because I don't know I think there's, they always talk about the fight or flight syndrome and I think there's actually one in the middle and it leans towards ignorance is bliss. Simply because she's in a location where there's things like the bombing just what was it, two days ago? And you know she called me and said just to let you know I'm okay and I was like not to sound bad but I really didn't, it really didn't scare me, one because when I saw it on the news I saw that it was downtown and I knew she's not downtown so I was like okay but I think there's that mental block where you just try not to think about it so that you're not always stressed and I think that's the approach I've taken. I don't think I've knowingly took that but you just, yeah I try not to stress about it because then that bleeds over into my interaction with my daughter and then she gets stressed and then also there's the thing with my wife, when we talk if I'm stressed it stresses her out and it's that circle and it gets worse and worse. I don't

necessarily say that's the best approach um you know you don't want to not seem concerned because I think that's the way she took it at first but I tried to explain to her that when I heard the news and I saw that it was downtown it just never dawned on me that she was ever in any danger because it was in a location totally separate from where she's at. Yeah it was only four miles away but the danger zone was specific to that area as opposed to where she was. Oddly enough she did have a stray round go through her room one day so it definitely that day but again that day but I got the news after the fact so that simply she was calling me so obviously she was calling me so I knew she was okay. The stress was minimized by the thought of well she's not hurt one, the threat's not immediate so that's not as stressful but it's always I suppose in the back of your mind that the possibility is there I just choose not to think of it now. I've talking with other spouses with deployed spouses, they are not male, they are female but I think that's the approach all around that tell me when you get back how dangerous things were and then when I have you and I know you're safe it's less stressful. Again I think by default I think that's the mentality I've taken. I didn't go in knowingly think I'd put it in the back of my mind and not think about it I think it's also just having a very busy lifestyle—you only have so much time to think about it at night but yeah I think that's probably my stance on that it's just coping with it and that's probably the flight syndrome. It's definitely not denial, I mean I know the threat is there and she's definitely in a situation that's very dangerous but I talk to her everyday so that's obviously very reassuring. If there were long stints in between and I still saw on the news things were happening I'd probably be a little more stressful.

(R) Is there anything else you can think of that you'd like to share?

(P) No, I think I've got it all, but I guess if I think of anything else I can let you know.

(R) In that regard, I'd like to ask you to write...

(P) ...An essay?

(R) ...yes, and essay is such a formal term...

(P) ...it is, it's actually very scary (laughs)...

(R) (laughs) I wasn't sure what else to call it, a letter didn't seem appropriate and an essay IS formal, but basically it's a way to say anything that comes to mind in a completely anonymous format. This interview is confidential, no one will ever see your name linked with your answers. And the essay is anonymous, not even I will be able to link what I receive in the mail with what you write. So please just jot down anything that comes to mind. If you're thinking about this later and have one of those moments where you go "oh, I should have said ..." just jot that down. And don't worry, I'm not going to grade it...

(P) (laughs)

(R) ... (laughs) don't worry about complete sentences or grammar or anything. There's a self addressed stamped envelope in there.

(P) I guess a question I do have, she's only been gone a month and we're still in that transition phase so I'm sure things may change as time goes on and situations arise so um how long, when are you looking to complete this study?

(R) That's a good question. I'd like to have at least a minimum of three participants, though I'd like to have many more than that. The question is going to be how long is it going to take to find folks willing to participate. And in that regard, if you know of anyone else whose wife is deployed and think they wouldn't mind coming to chat with me for a few moments if you wouldn't mind passing my information along I'd be happy to get in contact with them. At any rate this particular phase is kind of open. Best-case scenario I'd like to finish the data collection within the next month or so at the very latest.

(P) I didn't know if you were working on a restrictive schedule.

(R) No, my schedule is pretty much my own. But in that regard, once I do have all my data collected I'd like to email you my completed findings and have you verify them for accuracy. Certainly everyone is going to have unique experiences and I'm looking at it from a purely descriptive standpoint but if you wouldn't mind reading over the themes and ways a person can describe the overall general experience and just make sure that they seem representative of your general experiences I'd really appreciate it. Also, within the next couple of days I'm going to send you an email summary of our conversation today. I'd like for you to look over it and make sure that I didn't misunderstand anything.

(P) So I know nothing about this whole process so I guess this is off topic but on subject but what happens to it after this? Is this something that you keep with you?

(R) It is a part of my doctoral dissertation. When I am done I will have three little letters after my name. In some regards it's the last step to a degree but in other regards, this is a topic that everyone experiences when they have a spouse on active duty. It's not a matter of if he or she will be deployed but when

(P) Right oh absolutely.

(R) It might be 2 months, 6 months, 2 years, 5 years but at some point it will happen. My husband is going to make a career out of the military so this will be something that affects me for some time. In the course of doing this research I've met people who know people who know other people, and there's a person out in DC who I know through a friend of mind who has expressed a lot of interest in reading this when it's done. This

particular person does a lot with the formalized programs the AF offers. Best-case scenario...

(P) ...Oh, it can be incorporated into that...

(R) ...yes, it can be used to shed some light on some of the other aspects of military spouses. I'm not exactly trying to change policy but

(P) ...I hope I'm not overstepping my bounds here but that would be something to consider—what would I like or not like what would have helped me, what didn't happen that could have helped me. Simply because that information could then help others. I'm thinking along the lines of the support systems and anything that is organized, luckily I've been able to do that on my own, find that support but if you're a new person to the area or to the AF it's a lot to take on. Luckily I've been in for 9 years and the culture is a part of me and that helps. But as we talked about with the spouses clubs, the foundations are already there but we also talked about how the misconception is that it leans towards a woman and not only that but also from my perception it leans towards a non military spouse and you kind of need to make sure that you capture all facets of those of us who are here at home.

(R) The term military spouse incorporates a whole lot of people and it seems that what's out there right now is perhaps geared toward one little pocket of spouses.

(P) It does, absolutely it does. And maybe at the time that was the most concerning simply because those are the ones out there that have nothing or no one, they've just moved away from their family they are relocated and don't have friends and don't have support so they help provide for that but there's still that other aspect of the people that are thrown into the situation and have somewhat of a support but from a male perspective it's a little bit different. It's not like I just go to my friend and cry on his shoulder and say I miss my wife I mean it's not something I do. I think it would be great if there was a way to better support those of us in this situation. And the culture is changing and obviously I don't have numbers to back this up but I'm sure there are demographics to show how the military is changing as women become more dominant in the workplace because as those numbers grow you get more male spouses that are at home during deployments. I think that as time goes on that's going to continue to grow as it has in the past so the people that are in my situation are definitely going to be more and more.

(R) Thank you very much for your time. If you have any further questions or comments please don't hesitate to contact me.

## PARTICIPANT B

Researcher (R)

Participant (P)

(R) So basically, just to start with if you would tell me as much as you feel comfortable with about your experience of being here while your wife is deployed

(P) I don't know, I read that question and tried to think of what the best thing is to tell you about it and there's not much. I mean I work from home and we just moved here 6 months after, I mean we moved here 6 months before she deployed so I don't know anyone here I don't ever leave the house I don't know nothing so you know it's been boring and uh a lot of the most difficult thing that uh that I think is dealing with the accounts. Because we only got married two years ago so she has a lot of personal accounts and they don't want to take your power of attorney they want their power of attorney so that's probably been the biggest hurdle other than that that's pretty much it there hasn't been much else.

(R) Okay, other than dealing with her accounts and the power of attorney issue that we've probably all unfortunately experienced...

(P) Yeah, it's such a pain

(R) ...in one particular point in time or another were there any specific challenges you've noticed since she's been gone?

(P) You know that's was...that's pretty much it. I haven't dealt with a lot of challenges but um, our kids are well they aren't ours they're hers, my step-kids are older so one's in college and one's 17 so it's not like I have little kids to deal with or you know it's been pretty easy going as far as things to deal with.

(R) Okay, now on to coping. I don't know if you're aware or not, but the AF often times provides avenues of social support and I know you got my initial contact email through the A&FRC have you gone to any of the official, formalized functions that they offer at all?

(P) No, they are geared toward women, they aren't for men at all. I mean even the name, like the recent one, they're called "Diva night" I mean that right there pretty much tells you that this is not a guys thing.

(laughing) I know, that's what it says, join us for Diva night you know this and that this and that and I'm like, you know even if it were something I want to do even the name itself keeps me from going to it or from having an interest to it. It's all really geared towards women I think

(R) Yeah I can see that based on what you're describing, and I've seen a lot of the geared towards women through my research. In fact, that's what drove the whole idea of this research...

(P) Right.

(R) ...Wanting to look at what the husband's who stay at home experience. It seems like that's a growing population of military spouses and maybe they're underrepresented in terms of what's available and things that maybe they would even like to do...

(P) Yeah, you know you would almost have to have a separate group. I don't think you can have a support group for men and women together, I don't think it works, I think you have different needs I mean there's certain ones that are going to be the same but guys are just different than girls you know: we aren't going to like all the same stuff or talking about the same subject or um you know guys talking in a support group will probably have different topics of conversation versus women so I just don't think it works. I mean not saying you have to segregate it but you have to have one geared more towards men and one geared more towards women I would think for it to be successful for men anyway

(R) That's a really interesting perspective and definitely great information. My husband's been in for 11 years and I've had my fair share of deployments and I've not experienced a whole lot of men rushing to come to any events.

(P) I don't think you're supposed to. You know I just think that's a male mentality is that you don't ask for help. Even if you need it you don't you know you just figure out a way. You know whenever it snowed out the commander sent someone over to the house to make sure that 'can you get out' you know they called me and asked if I needed anyone to come over and help me so they offer the same services but it's nothing that I don't think a man would take part in just because we're different. I'm not saying its good or bad or whatever it's just different. Um I think if you're in a place where you already knew everybody it wouldn't be a big deal. I mean if we were still in Colorado and she went on deployment it would be far less of a deal than being here. Or even if I was prior military which I'm not. I don't understand the system or you know

(R) And you said you've only been married for two years?

(P) Yeah, two years

(R) So the whole military is probably new to you then?

(P) Yes, and I don't like it. I don't care for the military

(R) It's definitely it's own culture that's for sure.



(P) Yeah, and you know...I golf a lot so a lot of the guys I've met around here I just don't have anything in common with them. Military men are very much uh a man's man: you drink you talk about women you talk about cars and I don't. I'm uh more of a geeky kind of guy. I've been doing computers forever so I do a lot of electronics. I'm in school for my Master's right now so I don't know I just don't I don't know, the culture is much different than what I'm used to I guess.

(R) If you were to give advice to a new AF spouse, someone who is actually very much like yourself, just coming into it, and his wife is getting ready to deploy what kind of advice would you give him.

(P) Oh man, I don't know. You just have to find something to keep you busy. Because if you sit and dwell it's tough, it's real tough, I mean I don't know, I mean I guess just find a hobby, find something to do, find something you like and deal with it. Try to meet as many people as you can before she deploys especially if you're someplace new like this because if you have kind of like a group of friends that will always help and you have to have a strong relationship because if you don't it would never, never survive a year deployment.

(R) Oh, is she gone for a whole year?

(P) Yeah.

(R) Those are 'nice'.

(P) Yeah, it's horrible.

(R) You brought up having friends and kind of using that as what, like kind of your own support system? Is that what I'm understanding

(P) Yea, exactly like your own support group. Right. That's what it would be. I don't have that here but yeah. I chose just to work. I work a lot so...

(R) I know that feeling too...

(P) I just throw myself into that and uh, I have some hobby and stuff but for the most part I just kind of work and do my thing.

(R) I don't know where your wife is located at but is the well let me back up. My husband's been deployed to some locations that are maybe a little more hostile than others by their very nature and the concern factor I think is determined by the location. Have you found that to be any kind of issue? Do you worry about the fact that she's over there and you are here?

(P) I do sometimes but I think my biggest concern before she went, before all of this was that she would change. That when she came back there would be something different about her. Um but she's a Major and she's the Deputy Director of Logistics so she has more of an office setting. She's not off killing people or have people trying to kill her. I mean the base she's at now is more of a frontline base so they get attacked often and then she has to go out and do whatever they do there. I worry about it but not as much as I thought I would it's not. I think if you thought about it, it could really make your nights long so there have been times, especially whenever we're supposed to talk—we always, we pretty much talk everyday we just chat over the internet. Without that this would be a whole lot worse too but um if she misses a chat or is traveling from base to base I won't hear from her for a week so I'll scour the news and look for things that happen and when you see those things, and I haven't heard from her in a couple days, there's something happening near her then I would worry a little bit more but just day to day I don't. I don't worry about it.

(R) I ask that because a lot of the research that's out there deals with that sort of worry factor but the vast majority of the research is geared towards using women as the one who stays at home.

(P) I think that fidelity is more of an issue I would think for men, for a man staying home and his wife going there than vice versa. I don't know, you've been in the situation where your husband deploys right?

(R) Yes

(P) Well, he's there with a bunch of other guys I mean the chances of something happening of their being infidelity are very slim but a woman, you've got a woman there and there's 10,000 men there to every woman so that's more of a concern than any kind of physical danger. But that's why I say you have to have a good relationship. You have to, it has to be there. I mean it always creeps into your mind that...just like anything else you just have to push it out of your mind.

(R) Right, and then we go back to that dwelling statement earlier (laughs)

(P) (laughs) you really do because if you start thinking about anything, about any one thing it can get pretty bad. It can tear you up. It can keep you up at nights and stuff so.

(R) When you found out that she was getting ready to deploy for the year did you guys do anything special to transition into that or to be prepared?

(P) Nope, the only thing we did was get all the powers of attorney (laughs)

(R) (laughs) those wonderful useless pieces of paper.

(P) You know I was pissed. I was mad about coming here I was mad about it. We put all warm places; I don't like winter so I was already mad about coming here and then I find out she was deploying on top of it and I was like (laughs) "well let's just get divorced now because there's no way we're making it through this; it's not happening" so um if anything I was more angry. It took me a long time to get over that part of it. You know, you're pissed; you're pissed at the military and at the war and at the President, and on and on. You know you get upset about the whole thing so that's what most of it was, and trying to get in the right frame of mind, you know, talking about things, you know if something happens if she comes back and is disabled or making all those plans things like that. But we'd went through a predeployment once before in Colorado but she had a code that kept her from going. That time there was far more preparation we took a trip, we met with all the people around the base on what happens in the event that something happens to her and this and that. So we went through that whole routine previously this time we didn't it was like all right.

(R) Is there's anything you feel like would have been beneficial to know before she left, or is there anything that maybe you wished you would have had but didn't?

(P) No, I think the biggest thing is just knowing, I mean there's nothing you can do to prepare for it. You just don't know what the situation is going to be like. What's it going to be like being separated? Is she going to be safe? What's our communication going to be like? What's her safety going to be like? Those are all the unanswered questions that make it tough. But that's not anything you can prepare for. You won't know until she's there so

(R) Well that's basically all I have in terms of questions that I set out to ask unless there's anything else that you can think of that might help describe the situation from your standpoint.

(P) No, nothing I haven't shared. I think they need to put more in place for men. It would take a while. I think you'd set up a support group and have an empty room for probably years. Then you'd get a couple people going. I don't think it's something that could be set up, send out a notice and all of a sudden have 15 guys there. Someone else would have to take that step first to let them know that it's okay and then people would follow. I still think there should be some things more geared towards men. Oh and they need to change dependent. I hate the word dependent on the spouse. I am not dependent. I make more money than her I am not dependent on her in any way. But everything I do I'm a dependent and that probably more than anything that pisses me off. And I'll say spouse. "well no sir you're a dependent" No I'm not, I'm a spouse. The kids are dependents, I am a spouse. But that's more of a military thing than a deployment but it still drives me nuts.

(R) From here what will happen is that I'll go home and get the verbatim transcript. I'm not going to email that to you but I'll just kind of do a brief summary and send that to you and ask you to read it over and make sure I don't have any misunderstandings and if not then once I get that stamp of approval or if there's a particular point where I've got it a little wrong and you're like well, that's not quite what I meant if you'd point those out to me I'll go back and adjust them. I'm not looking to prove anything. I don't have a hypothesis out there that this is what I think and this is what I'm trying to prove it's basically just explanatory in nature. I'm looking to describe deployments from your standpoint. I think that you are correct in terms that what is there right now is geared towards one demographic. And before that can change, as you mentioned it needed to I think maybe we need to know a little more about what goes on from a husband's standpoint versus a wife. And there's really nothing out there right now that talks about that.

(P) I think it's supposed to be that way. They should have a perfect system out there right now for women. The military's been around for a long time so they've had plenty of time and there will always be far more wives left behind than husbands so you kind of have to play to the masses. I think yeah, get a good system for them and then the men's system will have to be reworked. I don't think you can take the same system that you have for women and just kind of switch it to men.

(R) Right, so no changing the name from diva to dude and call it good (laughs)

(P) (laughs) right, right, exactly! The structure and everything about it would have to be, it would be different. A woman's support group might go out and paint pottery they make pottery I mean that's cool but you aren't going to get a lot of guys to do that so they'd have to do like a paintball night. Their discussion formats would have to be different than a women's I don't know I've never attended, but just the way you ask a woman a question is going to be different than the way you ask a man. I mean to get a response out of them. With guys it's hard to get that touchy feely thing going on.

(R) You are definitely making sense. I am hoping with all the research I'm doing, if nothing else it will be a step in the foundation of understanding what goes on and looking at deployments from a different point of view than what is the mainstream and then maybe we can, knock on wood and cross fingers, that somebody out there will read this at some point and think hey this is a really good idea.

(P) Yeah, right! Right.

(R) Maybe we should think about that. Because the demographics are changing and even though I agree with you 100% that I don't think there will ever be a time when there's more husbands than wives...

(P) Right.

(R) ...but it is something that's changing. Even in the last 11 years that my husband's been in I've seen a change, I mean there's always been dependents but the terminology has changed. First it was the Officers or Enlisted wives clubs and things like that and now we've moved to spouses...

(P) Well see, oh I'm sorry I shouldn't interrupt.

(R) No go ahead

(P) I was just thinking my wife kind of explained all that to me. She's been in for 11 years as well so she was kind of trying to say, well here she's the operations officer well not now because she's deployed but then or anytime she's a commander and I have to take that role, I have to have the functions and check up on the wives and do this and that and that's kind of how it was explained to me that kind of what you're saying. And honestly I don't know how that role will go if I ever have to take that role. It's like, well, we'll see. (laughs)

(R) (laughs) and I've not been in that position either to give you any tips or pointers from what I've seen done. It's definitely interesting and changing. I think in the future we'll likely see a little bit more of that in the future than in the past and you won't be the only one.

(P) Oh yeah. And even the structure, the way it's set up is a little weird like whenever, well say when I go golfing. That's where I run into most of the guys so if I'm playing with an enlisted person or I'm playing with the commander to me it's the same, it's just a person. But when they are around each other the way they interact is different and it's weird to me. How can you separate it as much as you do but they do. Or like whenever you meet someone and you're friendly with them and it's like hey let's invite them over well, no we can't do that because they are enlisted and it's something I still can't get past. And again that's just a military thing and I don't know why they segregate that. I'm sure there's probably a good reason I just don't know what it is.

(R) While I think I understand the reason for that, my own personal observation is likely a bit skewed. One of my very best friends in the world is an enlisted spouse...

(P) ...well I guess you could it's just your husbands can't hang out with you both together...it's maybe like one on one. It's a weird set up where you can't hang out as a couple and kind of elitist because I usually have more in common with the enlisted guys than I do with the officers. The officers are always kind of in the I don't know they try to be more proper even when they are around each other. But then again we just came from the Academy so I haven't had a lot of exposure but at any rate (laughs)

(R) (laughs) The one last thing I'd like to ask you to do, and I'll just give this whole packet of information to you, I called it an essay because I wasn't sure what else to call it.

A letter didn't seem appropriate; it's basically just something you jot down over the next couple of days. If you are thinking about this interview and something pops into your mind and you think hey I should have said blah blah blah, or anything else that comes to mind regarding being here while you're wife's deployed if you could just jot it down and send it in the mail to me. An essay sounds so academic and formal and I'm not going to be grading them or anything...

(P) No, not it's ok.

(R) ...it's just one avenue to get information that you either forgot to mention, didn't think to mention, felt uncomfortable mentioning. There's a self addressed stamped envelope for you to use. While this interview is confidential, the essay is completely anonymous. I'm asking you to not put any identifying information like your name or refer to the time and place of this conversation.

(P) Okay, if I think of anything else I'll let you know.

(R) Thank you. Like I said, this is a descriptive research project, I'm just trying to describe a particular phenomenon. I know you mentioned you're working on your Masters so I'm not sure if you're familiar...

(P) It's just in science, it's just an MS and it has to do more with technical qualifications so it's more of a portfolio than a thesis.

(R) There are definitely days when I think I'm a little jealous of that (laughs). The last thing I'd like to ask you for is if you happen to come across anyone who meets the criteria, basically is the one left behind while his wife deploys if you wouldn't mind passing my name along I'd be happy to contact him and see if he's interested in chatting with me for a few minutes.

(P) Okay, I'm not sure I know any other husbands in the same boat as me, I'm the only one I know but if I happen to come across anyone I'll be sure to let them know.

(R) Great, I definitely appreciate that. Do you have any questions for me?

(P) Nope.

(R) Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today.

## PARTICIPANT C

Researcher (R)

Participant (P)

(R) Okay to start with, how about you tell me as much as you are comfortable telling me about the experience you had when your wife was deployed.

(P) Okay, you want to know about how I felt when she was deployed?

(R) Whatever you want to tell me right now.

(P) Let's see, she got a little surprise, she had some head's up that it was coming down, that her command was going to get tasked with a commander level person: she was a sitting squadron commander at the time and um so she had a little warning that it was coming and she was okay with it, I mean she was deployed before; before we met...(left out specific locator information) so she had done it before, and she's had overseas time so she wasn't upset about it. She signed up for it and was okay with it. I wasn't surprised. I knew something like that was logical. I thought I knew where they would send her based on what was going on in certain locations, and where the major support operations were located but she picked up something different, someplace out in the middle of nowhere almost impossible to get to. So when it came down she was a little surprised but was comfortable with it. I was okay with it because I had deployed as well several times. I was a second lieutenant during my first deployment so I knew what she was getting into. For a support officer it was a big deal because it sets you apart; it's a checkmark that kind of lines you up for better things in the future so career wise it was a good thing to have happen to her. Emotionally it was going to be, well I'm going to miss you a lot but the connectivity is so much different now than it was when I was first deployed where I was gone for two and a half months once and was able to call home once and the mail was like "pbbbt" it didn't happen and then shortly after that it got a little better the next deployment when we were able to use the communication lines when they weren't being used in an official capacity but in her case I was confident that we'd be able to talk and the other thing that was really beneficial to us that was kind of surprising was she was a major when she went over and I was a colonel sitting in Washington DC in a fairly senior position so I wasn't all that worried. Plus I had traveled all over the world previously so I knew that if something were to happen to her I knew somebody who could get to her quickly so I guess I was proud of her that she was selected. I was proud of her that she was going to go do it and I was excited for her I guess. Of course we didn't have kids so the only thing on me was taking care of the house and keeping the cat happy so not that much impact.

(R) Did you find any challenges that you had to overcome while she was gone, maybe something that you didn't expect or just anything that you found challenging while she was gone?

(P) No because we'd been apart off and on a good bit. At that particular time I was stationed in Washington DC and she was still in Oklahoma so she basically buttoned up the house in Oklahoma, it was an on base house and she had neighbors check on it so in that respect, well there were things I picked up on her end that she would do herself like bills and things like that that I now took care of for her but it wasn't anything major. Our situation, I think with being two officers was not the same as if I all of a sudden had to pick up child care and things along those lines. The biggest thing was I told her I'm going to make you the happiest person over there. I committed to writing her everyday and I sat down and actually hand wrote a letter or hand wrote inside a card that I sent her everyday. And I did that on top of the emails and on top of the phone calls because it was one of those things that I remembered from my early deployments that mail almost never came it was sporadic. In fact in one location they would raise a flag when the plane came in with mail, it was so few and far between, so that the whole base could see it and people went crazy when the airplane brought mail so I knew how big of a deal mail was. So she got a lot of mail. And I also committed to sending her a care package once a week so I actually had the premade boxes and I put them on the dining room table and whenever I'd go shopping or find something cool or a magazine or something I'd just put it in the box.

(R) That's a good idea

(P) Yeah, and every week I tried to go and mail the box. I did pretty good. I probably wasn't a 100% but I'd say I probably only missed maybe one or two weeks where she didn't get a box out and maybe just a handful of days I didn't write. I numbered the letters so that when she got them she knew what order they were in. I'd put a number on the top of the envelope so that when she got them she could look at them and say okay do I want to read 162 before I read 145 or whatever. But she could make a decision the joke on her end was she would go to mail call and since it came in sporadically she would have like four boxes and a stack of letters like that (hands held apart about two feet). I think emotionally it helped because everyone said whoever that is really loves you (laughs).

(R) (laughs) that is awesome. So did you go to any formalized support groups that they have for spouses?

(P) No I didn't in fact, it...I guess my situation is so different...she pinned on Lt. Colonel over there—that was probably my biggest disappointment was I wasn't there when she pinned on Lt. Colonel. But she did and her wing commander did pin her on—no I really didn't go because you know, it's, I didn't really feel that I wanted to draw attention away from that and then I didn't feel that it really fit my needs. I held a fairly



prestigious position and if I needed anything or wanted anything I knew how to pick up the phone and call. Oh, I'll tell you a real quick little story: when she got over there she didn't take any real clothes with her; it was all fatigue uniforms and battle dress uniforms and stuff and her desert cammies were what she had and I got a phone call from her and she said she got an invitation to a big to do downtown. She was one of the few people who were able to get off base because of her position she would go once a week downtown and so she needed some civilian clothes. She picked up a few things there but she got invited to a reception for the ambassador of the location with all the dignitaries of the countries government and she was really excited about it. But she says I don't have anything to wear. I said well what do you want and I'll get the stuff out of the closet. I was in the closet and was saying okay here's what's in here what do you want. She said I want my shoes and I'll buy a dress downtown but they don't have pantyhose over here and I really, really need panty hose and I didn't bring any jewelry. So I said okay don't worry about it I'll take care of it so tell me about panty hose. She says okay this is what I wear okay, wrote it down, how hard can this be. So I got off the phone and I was talking to my mom that night and I said oh she's doing great and I've got to go buy her panty hose. And my mom says make sure you buy her two pairs and I'm like why? You know, she only needs one; she can only wear one pair at a time and my mom started laughing. She says no you don't understand she goes when you put panty hose on you always rip the first pair. I was like what? She goes yeah, they always get a run or there's something that you mess up the pair, but if you have two pair the first pair works. I guess it's some kind of girl thing. So she says make sure you buy two pair and I'm like oooohkay. So the next day after work, I'm in uniform and it's not like here we wore the blue uniform so I go and I'm in my leather jacket and everything and I walk into Kohl's because that's the only place I know to go shopping for stuff so I walk in and go to the panty hose section and I stood there and said, "I'm here to buy panty hose and I don't have a darn idea what I'm doing and I need help." And these three women came running out to help me and I said here's the situation: she's deployed and we need panty hose and here's what she told me. I did not know there were that many panty hose in the world. How do women know? There's all these shapes, colors, brands sizes. She told me what brand she normally wears so this lady was very nice and says what size is your wife.(laughs) I said she's about this tall (motions with his hand) and is about this big (another motion). So we finally figured it all out and I bought four pair because I wanted to be safe. (laughs)

(R) (Laughs) better safe than sorry

(P) Exactly better safe than sorry and then I remembered that she didn't have any jewelry so I went around to the jewelry counter and got her some little odds and ends, some earrings and a necklace that would go with anything, got that with the shoes, boxed it all up and put it in the mail. It got there the day before the reception. Here's the funny part. It's her, her wing commander and like one of the senior flier attached to the base going through the receiving line. The ambassador was a classmate of mine from war college so I sent her a note saying hey, my wife is stationed at the air force base and she's going to your reception if you get a chance to, say hello. So she's going through the reception line

with her wing commander she gets to the ambassador and the ambassador says, hey are you XXX and she goes yeah and then the ambassador gives her this huge hug and says oh, XXX told me you were coming it's so good to see you, how are you doing, do you need anything, can I help you out. And here's her boss who is freaked out like ooohkay and they walk off and he turns to my wife and says how the hell did you know the ambassador? So, connections, it's a small world.

(R) Yes it is.

(P) It's a very small world.

(R) What advice would you give to any new air force husband who is coming in and is about to experience a deployment for the first time as the one who is staying behind?

I think the biggest thing is to get in there and really understand what's available to you and then um don't be an idiot—don't be guy stupid about it because guys automatically think well I don't need any help and I don't need anybody. And I guess this is going to sound very sexist but the neat thing about being a male spouse is almost everyone else is a non male. You stand out a little bit. As a rule they are very nice, warm, competent people that are willing to help you and talk to you, and you'd be surprised how much you have in common with them. It's like do you join the wives' club, that's kind of an up to you kind of thing. The neat thing is you're going to find that they accept you, they are very, very helpful and you're going to be surprised at all the things you don't know (laughs) like panty hose!

(R) (laughs)

(P) If not that, it's going to be something else it may be a problem at school, you know my daughter is having this problem and it may be something that guys just know nothing about. So unless you have your mom or your sister or somebody to talk to you know there's somebody right there next door where you can say hey do you know anything about this or do you know anybody and women are much better at that social communication as a rule than guys are so take advantage of that.

(R) Well, those are the main questions that I had to ask you; and you answered several of them at once.

(P) If you want to we can go back and hit the ones that I covered in a different question that way if I think of anything else we can cover it.

(R) Well, I know you said you didn't really experience any challenges during your wife's deployment, but can you think of any ways in which you dealt with even minor challenges you might have faced? And if not a challenge, anything that might have been stressful?

(P) The biggest thing that I think is challenging to everyone who is over there and here is your main connection back. Even though you have email and you have phone calls and you have letters, you see what's going on in the media and it's always a concern for you because it surprised you how more in tune you are to wherever your spouse is than you were before and in my case I was very aware of what was going on in the world because I was dealing with it. So I had access to a lot more information if I wanted to look up anything in the system I could all the way from intelligence briefs down I had access to that. That's good and it's also bad. So as a rule I didn't do it. I did it once and was like, okay that's just way too much information and it's raw data and it may not be something that you want to deal with.

(R) Yeah, and you can make numbers say anything you want to

(P) Yeah! And then you're worried about things that you maybe shouldn't be worried about it and you can't ask her about it because she may not even have access to that information. I might have known about it before she does or it might have been something that they would never know about because of positions and so in that respect I stayed out of it. I had it in the back of my head that if something happened I knew who to call and talk to if something went wrong; I wasn't worried, everything from getting some kind of support to her to getting somebody over there. I knew how to do that and I'd dealt with various embassies and had several classmates I could call. I was in a very, very comfortable position. The thing though is the news media. You become very in-tuned to everything that's on the news about where your spouse is at, super in-tuned to it. You pick up on things that otherwise you would have let go back so the constant issues I picked up on with her location was the downtown: there were shootings and robbing and just because they are Americans and they are there they are exposed to it and now you become exposed to it. It's like wait a minute! Something happened downtown there was a shooting, there was an American involved, well gee the only Americans who are allowed off base are my wife! So you become hypersensitive to things like that and you don't necessarily need to be but it's just a natural state so you're always kind of watching and listening and sort of perking up if you hear anything like that. There was an American captain who was captured in the same location and she was a runner, she escaped and they shaved her head and that sort of stuff happens and if you think about it and if you picked any place in the world and started paying attention you'd find that there's a lot going on there in the day to day that you just don't even notice. So I guess that's another advice, don't over do that and realize that if something were to happen that you have access to people within your community, within your base that have access to. For example if you were a young airman's spouse, married to a young airman who is deployed you can talk to your squadron commander or your wing commander and say look I'm very concerned and they would have the same kind of set up as I did at my level and I can at least pick up the phone and call, I know who to call, something along those lines. That's the biggest thing the media is not necessarily your best friend.

(R) Is there anything that would have helped you out during this deployment process, from start to finish that was not available or that you wished might have been available. Something that would have been helpful to you or something that you can imagine might be helpful to a new Air Force spouse in this situation.

(P) You know I don't...well, I was fine. I try to think if I were somebody else, I guess I had the skill set and the position that I could get just about whatever I needed so I didn't want for anything. But I think sometimes that um I look here on base, a couple of our neighbors are deployed the big thing that the base itself is so much a part of your life. It's so often what I notice is that the deployed spouse is often forgotten. They don't get the invitations that come down through the command level so I know that when my wife gets an invitation to something she forwards it to those neighbors because she's not on anyone's list. Her husband it but he's not reading his email from here and even if he can still access his email back here as Ellsworth he's so overwhelmed where he's at that he's not concerned with what's going on in the wing, or that they are decorating the club this morning does she want to go help out. She's not getting any of that and so unless people really pay attention and make sure that somebody takes charge and says do you know this they tend to become isolated. I've noticed it a couple times here that once the spouse deploys the spouse that's left here, unless somebody really makes the effort to reach out that spouse is left out. It's a natural thing to happen because they don't want to be a burden so they tend to just congregate with their friends but the rest of the second and third level out just gets left out and it's easy to do. You know you go to the events and the husband's not here so they aren't there. And you don't think about it and they don't pick up on the routine gossip and hear what's happening and they get further and further isolated I think that that's one of the things that unless you make a really hard effort it's not necessarily good.

(R) Do you think maybe that personality might have something to do with that too? It might be different for a spouse who is perhaps a little more outgoing than another.

(P) Oh, absolutely and the personal situation has a lot to do with it too. Like in my neighbor's case, she's got a job so everyday she's getting up and going to work, I mean she's got enough on her plate, I mean she's got her daughter, the dog, I mean her plate is full and I think people that have an engaged life it's not that bad it's the ones that are um there with the kids that don't work do they know who to call in case of a problem, who to call to come help shovel the driveway during the blizzards and where I really thing the concern needs to be is not on base because people notice hey, nobody's shoveled the driveway yet let's get over there and shovel it. It's what happens off base—what happens to the kids, can't afford to live in a nice neighborhood, you know they're just doing the best they can. Are they getting help? Is somebody reaching out for them. That's got to filter all the way down through that network of the leadership chain of the leadership chain thought he flight commander down to the section leader all the way down to the first sergeant. They have to be aggressive about it because it's so easy to just get forgotten. It's not just, well I'll use this example: nothing is easy any more. If you get

sick and you're horribly ill you know you've got to be seen at the hospital; they are going to take care of you immediately, go to the emergency room or call an ambulance. But it's that routine thing that's nagging that's so hard because of the forms because of Tricare, how do you make an appointment? I still can't make a doggone Tricare appointment to save my life. (laughs)

(R) (laughs) I'm not sure how many of us really can.

(P) (laughs) my company was putting on a booth at the Broadmoor and she went down with me for the first two days, she was teaching some classes at the AF Academy while I was doing this event. Well the night before we had dinner with an old friend and I had shrimp. (laughs) Well one of my rules is don't eat shrimp if you're not on a coast. I got sick, I mean horribly sick within an hour and a half I was just trashed. We paid thousands of dollars for this event and it was my first time out for my company, we were trying to make a good start and I'm sick as a dog. She's like we probably better get you to the doctor. Just that whole routine of trying to get an appointment, you're not in your regular place, you try to figure out who to call; it's not easy. It's not like you can pick up the phone and call 1800 Tricare, you've got to get the right region, you have to get permission to go it's just not easy. I would worry about the young spouse, male or female that has never dealt with this before or is getting into the system for the first time with a sick kid or something like that. Do you know to keep beating on them, to say no that's not good enough, that's not going to work, I'm not in Rapid City. And that's what happened you know. We need to go to a clinic, okay where is it, well it's on Mt. Rushmore Drive. Uggg we're not in Rapid City, well why not? This is where you're supposed to be. You get that kind of feedback and it's frustrating. Because we're in Colorado Springs! So give me somewhere here. Well I don't have that accessible. Well that's not helping he's in there puking his guts out. It's that kind of thing that you go through. I just wish things were easier you know. It's not set up to be convenient or to be user friendly and we need to work on that.

(R) That is actually all the specific questions I had unless there's anything that you can think of that's even remotely related to deployments and being the one left at home that would help paint that ultimate picture of this is what the experience is like.

(P) I think especially for a spouse that doesn't have military experience, go to everything you're invited to, go experience it and listen and hear and keep notes because people will bend over backwards for you. It's funny because even me, sitting there in my office with all the people that worked for me, the fact that she was gone, people made an extra effort to go well how's it going? How's she doing? Have you talked to her, what's going on. They are interested; they want to know. And share with them about it. I got some really good pictures back so I would print them and put them, one of my favorites was my contact book that held all the business cards of people I always had on my desk and there was a picture of her in a hummvee so I printed that out and put it in the book so whenever you went to my desk, first thing when you walked into my office was there she is sitting

in the hummvee and people would ask the question, well how are you doing do you need anything and it brings up things and sometimes just talking about it I was always very happy when somebody asked and then take advantage of the little things too. I think it's a good thing and it's a bad thing that we're so connected now days. We had email access daily so I knew everyday I'd get at least a short little note hey I'm okay things are going well. I had chicken again (laughs)

(R) (laughs)

(P) She almost won't eat chicken now because she had chicken almost every e-mail. But just hearing that. It's funny the things that they want that you don't think of. Can you send me the flavor stuff to put in water. They get tons of water but water's water, can you get me the little flavor packs. She missed bacon. Because it was a Muslim country they couldn't, they didn't make bacon so in her packages they now make shelf stable bacon and I would mail her bacon (laughs).

(R) (laughs) my husband's thing was eggs, he would say I really want an egg, I do not want egg beaters I just want an egg and at one point he was like can you please send me some salt and pepper?

(P) Wow! But you know it IS the little things. When I was deployed I had a tiger sauce, oh sheese they sell it in the commissary it's a bottle and I had tiger sauce and Tennessee sunshine; it's like a hot sauce and I put it on everything (laughs) because the food tastes like, oh great (laughs). But you know the little things really, really make a difference. Send them their favorite things and it's so easy now you can go to the post office now and they have these one price boxes that they give you: you don't even have to buy the box all you have to do is tape it shut; you make the box and then one strip of tape and it's shut and it's the same rate to send it to an APO address as it is in the States. There's no excuse for not filling it full of favorites, of candy (laughs) You know I asked her one time what do you need, and she says I'm fine you know but the guys that work for me are really kind of uh, there's nothing to read she says I'm fine because you send me what I want. I would send her her mail and her magazines I'm fine, you know I've got Family Circle and whatever I can't even remember, Woman's Health, and things but they're just sitting around and they just want to read something. So I went to the grocery store and bought every guy magazine I could find: Popular Science, Nascar Review Baseball today and sent a whole box of magazines. And that kept them going for a couple weeks so. It's just the oddest things that people miss.

(R) The last thing that I've been asking folks to do and let me grab out this last piece of data I'd like to ask people to do is just to write an informal, well I called it an essay...

(P) Okay...

(R) ...which sounds really academic and sounds much more formal than it needs to be. But basically it's just a way that's fully anonymous there's an envelope in the folder that's already addressed, I wouldn't know who sends what, but it's like that last question I just asked, anything you can think of that's deployment related that when you think about it later and you say, oh I should have said blah blah blah, just jot it down. And essay does sound really formal, but it's just a way to supplement the interview process. If at any point you think of anything else that might be helpful...

(P) Okay, is it okay if I just email it to you? I'd rather do that.

(R) Oh yeah, that's perfectly fine. And you don't have to do this but if you do think of anything.

(P) Well one thing that I do think of right now actually off the top of my head is we talked about getting ready for the deployment itself the homecoming is probably just as important or even more important. When she came back they flew her back, when she flew out she went through San Antonio and I think they went to Jersey and went over. When she came back it was on a chartered airline and they stopped in Frankfurt and then onto Baltimore. So since I was in Washington I went to Baltimore to meet her and we were able to get, well they had her scheduled for a flight that took off two hours after she landed to fly back to Oklahoma, we got the ticket changed so she could spend the night in Baltimore so I got a room at the Embassy Suites and she got there and got off the airplane and she was so worn out. She'd been on her feet for over twenty something hours and she was absolutely totally exhausted. And I asked her what do you want to do and she said I'd like to get into some real clothes and I'd brought some for her so we went back to the room and she changed clothes. One of her bags had ripped somehow it got ripped open and they had duck taped it back together and we went and bought a new bag to repacked stuff up and she got a quick shower and put real clothes on and we went to dinner. We went to the inner harbor in Baltimore; it's kind of a real cool place to go, it's all these real fancy restaurants and I thinking she likes steak I'll take her to Morton's or something really cool so we get there and I ask her where do you want to eat and she says the Cheesecake Factory. Oookay, gee you can have anything at the Cheesecake Factory from Mexican to Italian to Chinese but that's what she wanted so we went to Cheesecake Factory had a nice meal, we come out get in the car and I turn around and she is sound asleep. So 45 minutes back to the hotel from the harbor through the traffic, get back to the hotel, wake her up take her upstairs put her in the bed and she slept 14 hours straight. I don't think she even got up and went to the bathroom. She was that exhausted. And then your expectations are so different. If you think about a guy you're like wow she's finally back and I've been waiting for her and she was just a rag doll she was just exhausted. You know I had to put her on the airplane the next day for her to go to her home base so she was refreshed, she was clean, she was ready to go but that was hard because I had to stay at work because I had to stay at work and she was going back so we didn't see each other until two weeks later. We go to the Daytona 500 every year so we met in Orlando for the weekend and had a fantastic weekend and we had about a week and

I rented a house and it was spectacular. So in our case with homecoming the first part of it for me was probably pretty disappointing for her it was exactly what she wanted. I want a really good meal I want a shower and I want to sleep. And I'm like, I just want HER, I don't care about the shower and all the other stuff. So those kind of things you have to really be understanding of the situation. In her case she'd been up on the airplane. She'd been a troop commander so she was dealing with issues even on the airplane. You have to realize that depending on who you are talking to the flight home might be really relaxing, you know I ate and drank and I slept or it may be gee I'm dealing with this, I'm trying to get a phone call off the airplane Somebody's got this problem you know we land in Frankfurt or Ramstein or wherever they were and everyone else is having a grand ole time and I'm over hear dealing with everyone's issues. So just realize the kinds of stresses and strains they are under and realize that it's okay to defer some of those things until later. That was probably the biggest surprise for me. And make the homecoming special. Do the American flag thing and do it up right, I would really recommend there's nothing like coming home and having a sign and people waving a flag. And it means something to you there's a whole generation of Americans in the Vietnam war that didn't get that and I think that's one of the things that we've kicked up a couple notches and we do pretty well. And in all honesty they are so worn out that they don't care but it makes a good memory later. Because the flag that I had is still in the back of the car and it's so funny because we'll get in and will be doing something or moving something around and she'll go is that my flag? (laughs)

(R) (laughs)

(P) And I'll go yeah, that's your flag. Is that the one you were waving when I came home? And I'll go yeah, that's the one I was waving when you came home. So it's the little things that go a long way. But the expectations are so different from the spouse left behind is looking I've been carrying all this and you're back here, and the one coming back is like well I've been carrying all this and they have to pass that back to the military or back to whoever before they can take what you want to give them so it's not necessarily the way you think it's going to be.

(R) That is very, very true

(P) You probably realize the same thing you're like okay and then they want to do something totally different. I was in total shock, what do you mean you want to sleep? And then 14 hours? You've got to be kidding me, 14 hours? But that's how exhausted she was. And the other thing I'd tell people is you can communicate now but be careful what you communicate about because they can't do anything about it. The washer broke. Well what are they going to do about it? They can't fix it but you worry them if they think this happened or that happened so the more you can just take care of it yourself makes a big difference. But the good news is now whatever the worry was this morning, when it's fixed it's fixed this afternoon you can send the email that says it's taken care of. I know when I was in deployed many years ago whenever anything went wrong back



home it may be two or three weeks before I found out if there even was a resolution. In some cases you never found out. And that's always in the back of your head: is mom and dad okay is my grandfather still sick you know those kinds of things just kind of nag at you. But with our situation with me sitting in Washington DC I could actually pick up the phone and dial her office. And before she would go home at night it was when I went to work and I'd go in early and get in and she'd call me before she went home, hi I had a good day well okay I'm getting ready to start my day do you need anything no I'm fine and at the end of my day I could call her and go okay I'm going home and she's like oh okay I'm getting ready to start my day so it wasn't bad. And now I guess they even have cameras that they can.

(R) Yeah, Skype?

(P) Skype

(R) We've not tried it, of course he's here right now so we don't need to but some really good friends of ours are dual military and he's deployed for a year and his year is winding down and I know they use Skype all the time. He and their daughter I think even play checkers on Skype.

(P) Oh that is so cool!

(R) Yeah they do all kinds of neat things. Before he left he put a checker board on the wall and put Velcro on all the pieces and they are playing checkers through the mail. In fact they won't finish the game before he gets back. It's just a neat thing they do to stay connected.

(P) The kid things really adds a whole other dimension to it because well you've got two?

(R) We've got three kids.

(P) We're getting ready to adopt and nervous as all get at and scared to death but yeah that brings in a whole new dimension of how do you keep them connected I know when I was a kid my dad would deploy a couple times he was military and the letters would come maybe once a week and it was always is there anything in there for me? And there was always a little line in the letter. Tell XXX I miss him or to do well at baseball and sometimes he'd stick a piece of gum in which was precious. I wouldn't chew the gum my sister immediately chewed her piece. But my piece I kept because that was a connection back with dad. And I think that even as adults we have those little needs you want that something that is precious that you can touch and say my dad gave me that and it's a big deal for kids. And I think as adults you have so much it's like everything in the house but for kids it's like yeah.

## PARTICIPANT D

Due to a technical issue, the interview was erased immediately after it ended. The researcher took detailed notes during phone interviews since there was no body language to watch. This transcript was written less than five minutes after the phone interview ended. Many of the sentences are verbatim as the researcher wrote down specific phrases that caught her attention. The participant agreed that this was an accurate representation of the interview.

Well we didn't have a lot of time together before she deployed. I was just starting an accelerated nursing school so I was already in a different town. She left at the end of December and I had just got home for Christmas break. We had 1 week together and didn't get to spend a lot of time together because of all the phone calls being made to make sure she had everything and this person needing this and another person needing that and then her parents came for a visit so we really didn't have any alone time. We bought a new computer for her to take with her that had a webcam already installed so that we could do video chats because I had my computer for school. I stayed at our house for the rest of my break, about three weeks and I missed her but I was very busy at first getting things ready to button down there so that I could go back to school. And being in school added a lot more stress. It was an accelerated program so it was very intensive and I had to study a lot. And then we'd been married for four years and now I was back to being a bachelor and having a roommate so this was something that I had to adjust to as well. And my roommate was an Egyptian fellow so there was the added stress of other cultures living together. Thankfully my international business degree and the fact that I've done extensive international traveling helped me to understand and cope with the cultural differences. Things that might have bothered other people didn't bother me as much because I knew to look for them. A quick example is we had to share everything, and we split the refrigerator, well I couldn't have any pork product or any alcohol of any kind anywhere near his side of the refrigerator. Another thing, he'd be at home in his room and the phone would ring. I'd answer it and go knock on his door to give him the phone and he wouldn't answer it. It was very frustrating because I was like come on I know you're in there open up. But he wouldn't because he was in there praying. He prayed 5 times a day, which is not something that I am accustomed to. He was a very nice man and we got along great for the most part but I kept the fact that my wife was in the military from him. He had no idea that she was in the air force or that she was deployed. In fact, he never knew. In this instance culture played to my favor because even though he was quite progressive for an Egyptian, the man is still the one who goes out and earns a living while his wife is at home. He'd met her a couple times and they got along great, but all he ever assumed was that she was at home waiting for me to finish my education and come home. So at first things were very busy and I missed her but it wasn't something that was extremely hard. We had short notice but at first she was supposed to go to Iraq but then it got changed at the last minute to a less hostile location and that relieved quite a bit of stress. We did run into a few challenges at the beginning of the deployment. She had

trouble getting Internet connection so we weren't able to have our video chats for a while. This added stress because we got this just so we could talk and see each other. Then I don't test very well and so school was taking a lot of my time and attention. I don't know what it is but I just get nervous and flustered and can't test well. An example: I was in a study group going over a certain formula. One of my classmates was really struggling with it so I went over it until he got it, I explained it several times and he finally understood. Sure enough it was on the test the next day and he aced it whereas I got all confused in my head and didn't come close to getting it right. I think that school and the fact that she was deployed also caused me to get sick. I normally do not get any type of illness beyond a very occasional cold. I never miss work or anything due to illnesses and I seemed to be sick all the time. I think it was because I was so stressed out. I also couldn't sleep. I'd never had that problem before usually when my head hits the pillow I am out immediately. I also tried to work out while she was gone this time. She was deployed once before right after we first were married and at the base and I was still trying to figure everything out. I was very introverted. I worked at home so I didn't even leave the house unless I needed groceries or something of that nature. I lost a lot of weight and when she came back she was very worried that I had been like that, that I wasn't taking care of myself so I tried very hard to eat right this time and work out and make sure that I was taking care of myself physically so that she wasn't worried about it. I also know that I tend to withdraw socially when I am in that situation so I forced myself to be social. Of course there were times when I had to stay in and study, but I made myself get out and do things. Even when I didn't want to because I knew I'd have fun once I got there. Guys are vulnerable to "caving" you know closing the curtains and just staying in and surfing the internet or watching television and that can be a problem. It actually tended to work out so that when I was really stressed over a test or something she was calm and could talk me down so to speak. But it seemed that when she was having a rough time or a bad day she'd call and I wasn't able to do that for her. I didn't want her to be upset so I would worry about that and by the end of the conversation she was the one consoling me. In fact she'd say, this isn't how it's supposed to work. It should be you consoling me right now. Some of the main challenges I faced was my grandma being sick. But my professors really worked with me and I was able to take a week and go overseas and see her and that helped tremendously. In fact, my mental health instructor back when she first found out about the deployment worked it to where I was able to take a week and go see her. I was really upset about it because at this point she was still supposed to go to Iraq. I didn't feel like I wanted to draw attention to myself or even to give myself preferential treatment, different from my classmates by asking to go. It took my professor stepping in and making me, and it was great, you know it was really worth it and we had a great week and I think we both really needed it. We were able to get a lot of preparation done for the deployments, you know like wills and paperwork that we'd both need and figuring out what to do with the cat. We were really able to make a game plan. And we'd done the deployment before. She'd gone to Guam, but that was completely different. She was getting dive certified there and sending me pictures of her in a bikini on the beach, which I really liked. Those are the deployments I liked...not that I like any but if she has to go I want her to go to those locations and not to

Iraq where it's hostile. This was the first time she was going to a hazardous location. I really took the time that week to read online everything I could find out about the location and deployments so that I felt prepared. And I have to say that I was very relieved when her location changed.

I didn't really attend any formalized support. I know that it's available but I didn't want to drive all the way to the town where the nearest base was at to attend. In fact, I didn't have time because of studying. And it wasn't something I felt comfortable doing. I didn't want to go, what were they going to do anyways just give me a couple brochures. No thank you. I didn't really want to sit around and talk about the fact that my wife was deployed. You know how it is. If someone doesn't understand you have to explain everything to them and even if they do understand I didn't want to just sit there and talk about it. There was even a deployed spouses group that met in the city where my college is. I knew about that but I didn't go to that either. Again there was the time factor, I just didn't have the time, but it just wasn't something that I wanted to do. One of the things that I did that did help me was to stay away from the news. I normally get my news from the Internet and would research and read about what's going on everyday and I just stayed away from this. I was very selective. I might scan a headline, but I never clicked on it to read the in-depth background story. I don't watch a lot of television to begin with but I stayed away from that and from any movies that had anything to do with the area where she was. I just watched a fantastic movie about Iraq on the plane. It was one of the best acted stories I've seen in a long time and I really think it comes the closest I've ever seen to the truth to what actually happens there but I would never have watched it in a million years when she was deployed. In fact, I found out things after she got back that I was very glad I didn't know when she was there. She was a part of the convoys that drove into the city at super high speeds to either pick people up or drop them off or do weapon runs and things of that nature. She saw some very scary things when she was on these runs and I didn't even know she was doing them. Which was a good thing. I would have been a wreck had I known that that was going on. Another time she was shopping with another female who was deployed over there. She was looking for some little trinket or another they weren't in uniform but they were the only females in this area and it was not safe. They were surrounded by shady looking men dressed in all black and just really rather menacing looking. It took her a while to talk her co-worker into leaving and when she told me that I was frustrated that she was even in that situation to begin with.

The biggest thing that I would suggest to other just finding themselves in this situation is to find a workout buddy and make a schedule. It's not so bad if you're at work if you have a job outside the house because that's rather social in nature but make sure you have a schedule. The first time she was deployed I worked at home and it was very hard for me. Like I said I stayed in and never left my house unless I absolutely had to. Definitely eat well and find someone to work out with or at the very least to drag each other out of the house. Someone to do things with which in a way I guess is like your own social support. In hindsight I wish I would have at least gone once to the deployed spouse group in the town I was in just to see what it was like. I might have enjoyed it but I'll never know. It just wasn't something I was interested in. Another thing is to try out the

communications before she leaves. Make sure computers work and web cams are set up properly and things of that nature. If you need an email address get one and make sure you can send and receive emails. I've seen it happen before where folks have bought things and got over there only to realize that they don't have the right software or something isn't compatible. Just make sure that all the communication methods work. It's needed and you'll be glad you did. Because you know how it is, you live with someone and share your life and you talk about your day only now she's gone and you can't just come home and talk to each other about anything and everything and nothing. One thing that it's important to do prior to leaving is to make sure both spouses understand what is acceptable behavior. That sounds sort of silly but both spouses are about to be in a situation dominated by the other sex. The female is about to be deployed with God knows how many men and the man is left at home with a predominately female-based spouse population. Understand expectations that you each have. It's also important to recognize your own mental health status. My schooling and prior experience helped me realize that I was heading towards those depressed, reclusive feelings again so I made myself go get social so avoid that. Oh and hobby's are important, they are a good distraction but don't immerse yourself in them. They can tend to take on a life of their own and then other things get left out or forgotten and you just get single minded in the hobby. But definitely understand your own mental health and if you find yourself heading towards a bad or unhealthy place talk to someone. Talk to your workout buddy or a friend. Also there are contact numbers for people on base the family support center use them. These people are there to help you and don't feel like you're being a burden. Sometimes we don't want to draw attention to ourselves. We don't want to be the spouse that can't handle staying at home, but if you need help ask for it. And actually that's something that the air force needs to improve on. Right now you have to ask for help and it should be the air force coming to you. They do a bit but it's very informal. It needs to be formal and regulated and reach out to everyone and not just some. Sometimes it takes that active approach to physically go to someone's house not just call and say hey how are you doing can I do anything for you or even just not taking no for an answer. "Come on, we're going to go out. You haven't been out of the house in a while let's go."

## PARTICIPANT E

Researcher (R)

Participant (P)

(R) Okay, so the very first question I have is very general, very open ended and I'd like to ask you to tell me as much as you are comfortable about sharing, the specific experiences that you had when your wife was deployed.

(P) Ok, well she's been deployed a number of times since we've been married. Now we met when we were both in the military and were married for 10 years the whole time during which we were both active duty before we had the baby. So pre baby, whenever she would leave on a deployment or I would leave on a deployment during my active duty time it was kind of just smooth sailing. It was just you understood by nature of you being military also that having a military spouse means that you are not always going to be together and you're not always going to see each other for long periods of time. So before the baby we had that understanding and we were able to handle each of the deployment schedules, not seeing each other upwards of uh gee I can't remember. We used to keep records of you know what was our longest we hadn't seen each other sometimes I'd deploy I remember I had one deployment and then at the tail end of that deployment she got word that she was deploying to that same location too. So I remember that one it was during September 11 so I had left in November yeah I left in November and I remember just the way the deployments worked out I came back, was back maybe for a week and kind of high fived her out the door and then she left. That one ended up being I believe in the neighborhood of 7 or 8 months of separation. Like I say when you are childless then you know, just rock and roll. You just do what you gotta do because that's just what you are both into and it's kind of an adventure. I'm trying to think there was a period where—okay I had separated from the military I was out and then we were both in Turkey, now overseas in turkey in a different culture in a different environment as a civilian with her being gone it was very different from when we were stateside or in Korea or in any of those other places because I didn't really have any place to go or any sort of way to escape the base while she was gone so that made for some really kind of isolated feelings type time when you're just trying to fill the days with something. When you're stateside there's so much to do but when you're overseas in the middle of, well what is it, Turkey's the largest Muslim ally in culture and that was kind of rough. So I began trying to get jobs that took me off of the base and that led to situations where I think we broke our record of 7 months (laughs)

(R) (laughs)

(P) She deployed once when she was in Turkey and I was there maybe three months and said well forget this I'm going to go get a job somewhere and I took a job that had me gone for 6 months so when I came back when we were finally reunited that was like a 9

month separation. So our marriage was just really weird just really different just really kind of like I say was like being married to Indiana Jones (laughs)

(R) (laughs)

(P) She goes all over, does all those crazy things for a little while but then we had the baby and the last big deployment was my very first as the stay at home dad. We were in South Dakota at the base there, I was living on base there in South Dakota and she was gone during the winter she left for deployment, well they do it funny now days. You go for a month before the deployment for predeployment training

(R) Right.

(P) Then you come back and then you leave for your 6 months more or less, you know it's never guaranteed exactly 6 months so you never know exactly how long she's going to be gone so that one really changes your perspective when you're a dad you know and at the time he was, he had just, um he was a year and a half, yeah he was a year and a half so I was a dad by myself in South Dakota during the winter for I think well it was from October to June. You know it's funny, you count the days when they're gone you count the days and once they are back and it's all just memories you don't remember how long they were gone it's just they're back and that's all you think about. South Dakota was kind of rough being a dad with a 1 ½ year old because it's one thing to be a military spouse a non traditional military spouse being the male then it's a whole other when you have kids. That's like super nontraditional. Being a stay at home dad period is kind of weird and then being a stay at home military dad is kind of weird and then being a stay at home military dad with no wife for 7-8 months is really weird. There's just so much stuff you can say about this it's just uh a lifetime of experiences over the last ten years that have been just uh so beyond what I could fit in a simple conversation even if it were one hour, two hours it's like you wonder wow where do you start but in answering the first one, just the general what's it been like, well it's one way when you don't have kids and then it's a whole other world when you do. It's one way when you're both active duty military and when you take that jump and become civilian it's a whole other world. It's very there's so many different perspectives and so many different uh facets of just being a spouse that we could talk for hours about being a military spouse without a kid or being a military spouse with a kid, I having problems even trying to kind of start.

(R) How about we start with the most recent one where you did have your son and you were here in wonderful South Dakota in the middle of winter, were there any specific challenges that you found during that time.

(P) O geez, oh boy, okay so that was this past winter, just last year and then this summer when she got back. It's hard to believe it was already a year ago and that this is the first Christmas and Thanksgiving and New Years and wedding anniversary that we've all had together for a little while. This year has been so fantastic because in contrast last year

was very cold and lonely time. She had left like I said in the beginning of October I'm trying to remember because Rapid started getting some rather early snowfall, I think Nov 2 was a really big storm, the first storm of the year and so we had just said bye to mommy and then the snow came and just by the nature of where we lived on base you know you have to be prepared and have all your food and be ready to kind of like worst case scenario not leave your house for a couple of days until they dig your cul-de-sac out or until you're able to dig yourself out of your own house. And I remember that first blizzard giving me kind of the wake up call, the realization of what exactly I was going to be up against for the next 6 months being by myself with my 1 and a half-year-old son in South Dakota. The location is what made it kind of difficult, you know. People get cabin fever just being stuck in a house by themselves and then on top of that I had my son and it was kind of scary. He's my first and only kid and I didn't know what to expect. It's the motherly instinct that everybody talks about being so important and being kind instinctively knowing what to do with babies but I don't know I'm not a mom so it was scary. It was scary that I would be going through this winter with or in a situation where I had to really be on top of the ball and not just have myself taken care of which was a snap, which I had been used to over the last ten years but being responsible for my son for my baby all alone without mommy in the winter and in the cold and that was daunting. I was like forget this especially during the holidays. Being alone during the holidays with our family in Texas was just not something that I was going to be willing to do so I drove down to Texas and I did Thanksgiving with my mother in law and I did Christmas with my mom and dad and then I drove back up in January and Rapid was still snowy! It was still getting blizzards and everything. But when I came back I felt recharged and not so isolated and not so alone. So I was very happy I did that. I was very happy that I got the heck out of Dodge because if I was here I would have been driven crazy by the snow and the baby.

(R) Right, I know that sometimes just a simple change of scenery helps.

(P) Yeah, it's kind of rough, snow is rough. You can handle anything when you can drive down to the store and just get what you need if you forgot it but when snow is piled 6 feet outside your door and you can't leave your house then you've got to really be on the ball. You have to really be on the ball and being a male you're not going to be on top of everything if you're taking care of a little baby especially if it's your first one but there's an expected sort of dufeyness or expected stupidity and dumb stuff that you're going to forget or not anticipated and then not to be able to do anything about it is like that extra level of stress and worry was I handling everything? And worst case scenario you know what was I going to do if I couldn't get out of the house. And Rapid is that unique situation that unique environment during the snow times where you say oh well if I'm out of something my neighbor just had a baby but it doesn't help me if I can't even get to my neighbor's house because I'm kind of stuck. Even on the base when you had all the support in the world and all the people trying to look out for you and stuff like that but just the nature of the situation was such that you still felt extremely alone just snow



and cold kind of it kind of snow and cold and a baby and a mommy half a world away that was a crazy combination.

(R) I can definitely relate to that one. (laughs) not the mommy being away but other than that...

(laughs). I can relate to that one. So then the primary way then that you dealt with the challenge of being here in this particular environment was then leaving for a little while? Did you find yourself trying to combat that at all?

(P) Well leaving for a while was because of, well not just because of the environment but again the holidays and the time that it happened. I probably well I don't know, you know you always second guess your choices. I think I could have probably handled it if there was no snow or if it was during the non winter months, South Dakota would be an easy place to just glide through in that situation but the holidays bring their own sort of emotional sort of uh turbulence when you're by yourself so there's just like that perfect storm that I didn't want to be in Rapid even though I love the place I really love the place, no problems with it it's just in that situation the only way I was able to cope was yeah, to kind of run away and stay with the family. The holiday was a time when you did not want to be alone. Especially when you're worried all the time about your wife.

(R) Right, I completely understand. My husband was gone for Christmas and Thanksgiving not this past year but the year before that and I kind of did the same thing. I didn't want to go through all of the motions at home by myself so I did the same thing there. Now, did you happen to attend any of the formalized support programs that they have here on base?

(P) You mean like um play groups and stuff like that?

(R) Yeah, play groups or through the AFRC often times they have...

(P) Like little picnics in the park?

(R) Yeah

(P) I remember stuff like that. Because I knew someone at the family readiness center I would pop in there occasionally just to see what was going on, not just for my friend but I was familiar with all of the AFRC when I was not a dad. Because as a military spouse living like I say for 2 years in Turkey sometimes the family support centers are the coolest place on earth to be; it's a lot of fun so I was kind of aware of what they did so when we had the baby and I was in the deployment situation last year I did do a lot of the family support center stuff like attend the picnics and take the baby with me to those things they did. You know we used to go to the playgroups well you know the thing about being a male and going to the family support play groups and stuff like that with all the mommies it kind of gets old so I didn't do a lot of stuff if it meant I was going to be

around a lot of mommies. I kind of, well I put the kid first, I put my baby first so that he could get interaction with other little children his age or his size or whatever then yeah we went for it but if there was anything just kind of like...I remember the one of the support programs was some sort of an afternoon getaway where essentially the bottom line, the truth is all the girls all the deployed spouses wives would get together and just talk to each other about the experiences, what they are going through, and although it's it was advertised or described in a rather unisex way through general terms this is the military spouse um lunch get together or whatever it was where we'll talk about um everything that's on your mind I remember seeing things like sex and things like that I was like you know I don't think I really fit here in this situation amongst all the mommies talking about sex and things of that nature and what's on their minds so I would tend to skip all those things that meant I'd be interacting with just other females. So if it was a baby related event I was probably there. I remember there was anything, whether it was deployed spouses or not if it was a base function where I knew there were children or had children related events we were there but like I say because I'm a guy and hanging out with the other mommies was cool and all but I didn't I just didn't want to do it if that was the only draw. I understand military spouses or deployed military spouses programs existed and they were very communal in nature it was just something that I just didn't want to do.

(R) Right, that makes sense so were there any other either individual people or groups or maybe even just family or friends that you relied on when your wife was deployed?

(P) Well, let's see, when she was deployed you feel so different from everybody else being the man you feel so uh the situation feels so unique that it's hard to find anybody who I felt would understand enough to have those sort of conversations and I talked to my wife's mom a lot over the phone during the separation, during the deployment so she was a source of understanding because she herself was a military spouse. She's about the only other person that more or less fit, that I had a good relationship with that I was comfortable with to talk about the situation with because your own my own mom and brother in law and all them they could be roughly aware of the situation but there's really no body else in the world that I was that I was talking to on an intimate kind of stress relieving type level. Because even talking with her mom who may have understood more what I was going through was only so comforting because you don't want to be worrying her mom. You're her grandson's father you don't want to be freaking her out by saying anything like you're feeling overwhelmed so there was really no one like a familiar relationship that could stand in like a therapist that I had. But it didn't ever really get to overwhelmingly stressful that I needed to confide or rely on anyone beyond what I was doing with my mother in law so yeah, I don't know, it felt very solitary but it wasn't that big of a deal I didn't feel abandoned it was just the situation and we just ha to power through it we just had to get through it. I was going to say Alice Cooper kind of, I listened to the radio show you know Nights with Alice Cooper?

(R) Uh huh

(P) You know if there was anyone person that I listen to talk during that whole deployment every night because I would put the baby down and just stay in his room listening to the radio listen to Alice Cooper talking, so you know he was my confidant. (laughs)

(R) That's funny (laughs)

(P) He was the person I felt I was sharing the most with.

(R) If you could give advice to any new Air Force husband whose wife is about to deploy for the very first time what would that be?

(P) That's a tricky one because it would so depend on what their situation was. A normal regular Joe Civilian guy I would hope would have an understanding of what it is they got themselves into before hand you know. I wonder if many people really truly do understand what it means when you marry the military spouse. I don't know that any, know this sounds weird but I don't know that any civilian, anybody who has lived their life on the outside is truly ever really prepared for that day when they go off overseas or wherever and you're looking at 3 months or 6 months or whatever a year by yourself. You know I don't know that there's anything you can say to prepare anyone for that level of separation from that relationship. And of course the nature of a person's job sort of ratchets up the stress level. If there's any advice I'd give any man who is married to a, or is looking to get married to a military person I'd say try to marry a military person who is far away from the front lines as possible. Because it's like you said earlier, women are now capable of or able to or allowed to do 92% of the jobs and 92% of the jobs I guarantee well not all but a lot of them aren't just going to be a comfortable little easy positions where you're not worried about it. There's a lot of worrying involved. In the first place I'd say don't marry a military spouse (laughs) and second place if you do, try to marry someone who's not going to deploy a lot. If you are military and you marry the military woman and your life is just going to be such that that's just going to be what's going to happen and you may be separated from the military, you might be out you might be a civilian now yourself and I'd hope you'd be a little more prepared for what's coming. You know as an air force person, the Air Force I've always appreciated was as forthcoming and as honest as possible with information regarding the length of the deployments. I know there's a little bit of a fudge factor whenever someone is deployed they would like to get them back on X day but that's not going to happen.

(R) Right.

(P) That's just the nature of how it is. Now, Army people and their deployments of a year or more just put it so much more into perspective for me to the point where I feel like I shouldn't complain at all about her being gone for 6 or 7 months you know because you're the man so there might be societal or even personal expectations of yourself to not

be a very to not feel or to not need as much support as a woman would if she were alone so it feels weird uh trying to think of advice to give a guy in that situation when I knew as a guy myself seeing it come up I felt like nobody could really understand what I was going through and I don't know that I'd even seek out or listen to the advice of anyone else because everybody's situation is so different like I said just being married to military without kids is one world and married to military with kids is another and then whether you're Army or Air Force makes a world of difference. So about the only person I'd feel qualified to give advice to would be in the exact same situation as I am the guy who was ex military himself in Rapid with a one and a half year old in the winter. I don't know that anything I could say or do could apply to the myriad the whole un the uh what would you say the rainbow of different situations out there. It just would feel so impersonal. Being on the other side of it you know I'd wonder well what would that guy really know. If I was a guy who had no kids and my wife was going to be gone for three months I'd feel well...it's kind of men are stubborn that way we don't ask for help at the stores when we're looking for things and we don't ask for directions when we're lost on the road. So when you're in this situation which is several magnitudes bigger, more serious and more weighty than not being able to figure out where the fishing poles are at Target it seems that I'm still kind of the same way I didn't really care for advice. I didn't really think it existed out there from anyone in my situation and if there were other male spouses of deployed military I didn't feel like they would feel like they would really know what I was going through as the stay at home dad cause like I said I have all these weird qualifiers all these weird other layers and sides and uniqueness to the situation so I would say it's so hard to figure out what's going on in anyone's mind I would say again everyone's situation is different. I would say well I was free to do whatever I wanted to do because I didn't have a job either. If there was a guy who let's just say theoretically his wife was deployed and he had a job and a kid a geez I don't know that anything I had to say would help because I wouldn't know about juggling all those balls either. And the more general you try to get with advice the less helpful it is.

(R) That's true.

(P) My biggest um I think the smartest thing I ever did in my situation when my wife was gone was I went back to family and I fell back on family. I went geographically, I got myself away from the isolated type situation and I went back with family. And again, your mileage may vary. Some guys would probably be really you know like outdoor barbeque buddies with all their neighbors and have a different sort of support network than I did and they may not need to leave to get away to get back with the closest family they could while their spouse is gone because they might feel totally uh fine where they are with the friends where they are. And some people don't talk to their moms and traditionally guys don't like their mother in laws so you know I just feel like my situation was so unique and so isolated from anything anybody else could possibly be going through I don't know. Anything I could say about it or could share about it wouldn't help anyone. (laughs) I guess it would be go see your mom. Take your kid to see grandma.

(R) I know you mentioned a couple of different times that the nature of the job is going to influence a bit in terms of the worry factor and perhaps the stress over the safety of your wife. Did you find yourself in that position where you were really worried about the fact that she was there and you were not.

(P) Well, yeah. You see that's the whole idea, that's the bottom line because in the big picture the idea of a child growing up without a father is more acceptable you know in the eyes of society. Worst case scenario, the dad is the one that you can grow up without. It's always the women and children first you know. The kid can be with mom and still have a shot in the world if they grow up with mom and it's the dad he is the one who goes away or he doesn't come back and okay son that's just the way it's going to be. There's all these celebrities like Tiger Woods and Shequiel O'Neill and all these guys who didn't have their natural birth father and they went on to greatness. I think even like the President is in that situation or Rob Thomas from Matchbox 20, he never knew his dad but the idea that your mom, that your mom is the one that you grow up without that is just so unimaginable that you never in a million years want to think about it and then now we are in this situation where she's in a hostile location and day to day I thought OK, 6 months, 7 months we knew that and ultimately we can do that. Ultimately in our life the way this deployment worked we were going to PCS after she got back. This added extra stress and here we're looking at another life altering change that's about to happen and everything that entails and all the millions of things and I just kept thinking that's okay we can do that I just need her back you know and we can handle anything else that comes at us afterwards. We can handle all the problems in the world if she can just come back. It's one thing to go about as pretty much a single dad in the course of a deployment but it's a whole other thing to think of fatherhood every frickin' second of every minute of every hour of every day of the week of the month of those 7 months that she was deployed. I thought of what was I going to do if she never comes back. What if this 7 months as opposed to a lifetime with my son growing up without a mom so hell yeah I thought about that. Hell yeah I always thought about that every single second that she was gone I thought about what if she doesn't come back and then I'm thinking of that situation where my son doesn't have a mom anymore and moms are like I say they are the bare minimum necessary to grow up and not be all crazy serial killer or whatever horrible thing that could happen. (laughs)

(R) (laughs)

(P) You always hear about it's single mothers kind of toughing it out and okay well that happens where fathers go away or they decide not to be fathers but at least the kid still has their mom but no I was in a situation where my kid could probably possibly have to grow up without his mom and that was probably the most frightening thing beyond the South Dakota snow beyond the problems I had with my truck breaking down, beyond uh worrying about being well worrying about having enough formula or diapers, that was the big one and that's the one that you can't really share with your mother in law or mom or any of her family or her friends: those kind of thoughts and expect to be able to

maintain a situation where they're not that worried about you. You know because the last thing they need to worry about on top of their own relationship with my wife or their daughter or friend or whatever is worrying about you, you know? They're going to worry enough about you already that they don't want you to be sounding like you're going crazy but yeah that stuff's on your mind. It's always on your mind. May I confide? I think that it's just a lot different when it's the male whose the one left behind because like I say there are things that uh fathers do and things that mothers do and you know it's always been traditionally the woman the mother you know that's looked upon as being the one that's the most cornerstone figure of the two when it comes to the foundation of a person's life growing up so having it all switched all reversed is kind of it's very unsettling but again you know you had to understand that that's what you were getting into from day one but you also kind of feel well I understood it but now I brought another person into the world who may or may not understand that and explaining to him why he doesn't have a mom and explaining to him why his situation is such when he grows up is probably the more frightening of all the scenarios that I thought of every single moment that she was gone in the long term. In the long term when things would be more formal if everything went bad and how to figure all that out. At least it's a problem I don't think about any more or at least won't have to for a while.

(R) Was there anything in particular that you did whenever, well I know you said you thought about it all the time but if it ever got particularly bad was there anything that maybe helped you cope with it?

(P) I wasn't okay I was in this situation where I might have had it easy. He was one and a half years old he didn't understand the situation, he didn't ask any questions it didn't really, well I had no explaining to do for him. So I would see commercials on AFN all the time, the Armed Forces Network it's just a military only type channel would have all these commercials where a little boy and a little girl are watching the news and they get all scared because daddy's deployed or whatever and the mom has to explain and she has to be that support and I wasn't in that situation so a lot of my coping mechanism relied heavily on not watching the news, on trying to keep my mind as off of it as I could without any external reminders. Without anything extra bothering me where as some people try to stay as informed as possible I kind of just didn't want to know anything so (laughing) I guess that in a lot of ways running away was my coping mechanism. (laughing)

(R) (laughs). Was there anything during the whole deployment process which would include from the time you were notified of the deployment the deployment and then getting ready for her to come back is there anything that you think might have helped you during this whole process that you did not have? I know that kind of goes back to the question of advice and maybe it's hard to pinpoint because of all the differences that exist but if there was anything that maybe would have helped you out that you didn't have?

(P) Well, you know information about the situation is always going to be the hardest thing to give anybody but that would have been the most helpful for me personally, knowing how the situation was going to unfold. The military now as opposed to it was when I was active duty is an entirely different world and so this sort of the predeployment idea sort of blindsided me you know thinking that there was a whole month of separation that wasn't attached to the main deployment. You know kind of tacked on kind of came out from nowhere and I wish I would have known that was going to happen. I wish I would have known that was going to be a factor or at least be part of the overall scenario. I kind of felt sort of uh unprepared—well not unprepared. I know deployments forward and backward because I was in them myself. It's just the way the military works now is not what I was expecting. So you know you get prepared for one thing and then they kind of hit you with well, there's more to this so I wish that that would have been said from the outset and I understand everybody's jobs aren't going to be the same so not everybody is going to need that extra added stuff. Not everybody is going to have a spouse that is going to be gone an extra month on top of the deployment so how do they single out the spouses that are going to be affected extra and say well you know what and then decide that here because of her job you are going to go an extra month hey head's up. That would have been nice. Like I said that sort of hit me I felt blindsided by that. And then the nature of her job was such that I couldn't even really know a lot of times where she was. I knew where she was supposed to be the place roughly where it was that she went and reported to but I couldn't know anything beyond that. She moved around a lot and went to a bunch of places. So you know things that I couldn't have but I really wanted all had to do with information in terms of support because I'd like to know in case I did hear that 10,000 guys got blown up in whatever situation or region so that I didn't have to worry about it but I couldn't. That was extremely stressful. She was able to call she was able to send little DVD's of her reading little bedtime stories to the baby and that was great. We had little story times and I got to see her. That was, and like I say even during the times I was deployed, well let's just say from 1998 the idea that you could send back dvd and stuff they have so much contact that was just unimaginable and so I was so just from my own personal experience and my perspective of being in the military then I was so amazed at what they were able to do for me now that I was extremely uh, I was happy to see her in those videos. And those people who have that program going they are the people who really made it—I'll never know any of them, I'll never see any of them but they are the ones who made that deployment bearable and survivable from the standpoint of a dad of a one and a half year old. I was so grateful for that. I can't think of much more beyond freakin' holograms beaming her into my house every night that would be better than what they did for me. I was very appreciative of the communication that was allowed and I would have loved to have known a little more but I guess you know that's just the way it works that's just how it is.

(R) That's all I have in terms of preplanned questions to ask you. So as just a one last ditch effort, if there is anything else that we didn't cover that you can think of that might help paint that picture I'm hoping to produce of what it's like to be the one who stays at home. And like you said, I totally understand that everyone's situation is going to be

different but just at least to start laying the foundation for a whole group of military spouses that have a completely different experience of being the one who stays at home. Anything else that might help get that across.

(P) I'll say again, I can't think of anything that anyone can do except for the guys who are going through it and it is participate in those little meet ups and stuff. Because when I was going to playgroup and I was surrounded by 10-15 other women the organizer of the playgroup would tell me you know I know there's another dad out there. I know there's another dad out there who is in your situation and I'm going to try to get him to come, he said he would come and then that guy never showed you know if that guy would have showed, if I could have gotten any other guy in my situation to have at least tried as I did to show up to the things to kind of participate and show me that I wasn't really alone that would have helped. That would have been humongous but guys just aren't that way they aren't going to do it. They aren't going to show up. They're not going to hang out with a bunch of mommies and I totally understand. I totally get it, I know why, God, God I know why. I mean being around all the mommies talking about how their husbands are useless and no body helps around the house and stuff like that it you know I totally understand. No man would ever want to deal with that or talk about women's issues. I just did it for my son but you know it would have really been great if another guy would have kind of just showed up there. That would have been wonderful. So if there was anything that could have helped me more if there's anything I would have appreciated it would have been a show of solidarity of the other male spouses who had wives deployed or not just in this situation. That would have been fantastic. I guess then if I had advice for anyone it's you need to get out there and be more active, not just for your kids but for yourself and for the others in your situation that are going through the same things because damn it I felt really uh alone and isolated amongst so many other people in the same situation that were not of my gender. That's the only kind of thing that rubs me about it. Knowing that there were other guys out there in the same situation that just decided that they were going to tough it out or do it how they were going to do it or didn't need to participate in the programs that were available.

(R) Thank you so very much to take the time to talk with me. I really appreciate it.



## CURRICULUM VITAE

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| 2007-Present | Candidate for Doctor of Philosophy. Educational Psychology<br>Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota<br>Dissertation: When Husbands Remain at Home: A Qualitative<br>Look at the Support Air Force Husbands Receive During a<br>Deployment |
| 2005-2007    | Master of Science, Psychology<br>Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota<br>Thesis: Perceived Effects of Public Support on Spouses of<br>Deployed Active Duty Members   |
| 2002-2004    | Bachelor of Science, Psychology<br>Troy University, Fort Walton Beach, Florida  |

### **Professional Experience:**

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| 2009- Present | Independent Contractor, Institute for Professional Development<br>Course Creation: PY 101: General Psychology five-week<br>accelerated course.<br>Course Creation: PY 202: Experimental Psychology five-week<br>accelerated course.   |
| 2009- Present | Adjunct Faculty Member, Kaplan University<br>Courses: Introduction to Psychology, Contemporary Issues in<br>Psychology.<br>Responsible for preparing lectures and class activities for live,<br>online seminars, facilitates online discussion board threads.<br>Evaluates up to 30 students per course providing<br>detailed feedback for all coursework and major projects. |
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2009-Present	09-10 Ways and Means Chair, Ellsworth Officer and Civilian Spouses Club, 10-present President, Ellsworth Officer and Civilian Spouses Club Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota
2000-Present	Vice President, Laborers Together, International Dallas, Texas
2005-2009	05-06 Fundraising Coordinator, 06-09 Secretary, Spirit Express Cheerleading Booster Club Warrensburg, Missouri
2005-2008	05-07 Treasurer, 07-08 President, Warrensburg Wrestling Club Warrensburg, Missouri
2002-2005	Director, Eielson Wrestling Club Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska

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### **References:**

Dr. Doug Strauss, Associate Dean, State Fair Community College

Dr. Amy Sickel, Professor, Walden University

Dr. Sue Randers, Professor, Walden University

*Congratulations! This is the end of your dissertation!*